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EMERSONIAN PHILOSOPHY IN JOHN STEINBECK'S *THE GRAPES OF WRATH*

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por

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To my wife, who very wisely did not want to have anything to do with this thesis.

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I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Dilvo Ristoff, for his patience and humility.

ABSTRACT

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TOMASZ KRZYSZTOF PRZYTULA

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA
2003

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Ralph Waldo Emerson's philosophy is the seminal voice of nineteenth-century America, and is still deeply embedded in American culture. It reflects the views of the American Transcendentalists, a group of New England romantic writers, who believed that intuition was the means to truth, that God is revealed to each individual through intuition. Emerson's philosophy also celebrates the independent individual, who is often at odds with any imposing authority, be it religious or secular. His variety of individualism, however, grows of the self's intuitive connection with the Over-Soul and is not simply a matter of self-centered assertion or immature narcissism. All these ideas seem to find a vast, if not dominating, outlet in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. This thesis attempts to determine to what extent Emersonian philosophy contained in *Nature*, "Self-Reliance", "The American Scholar", and "An Address" affects the lives of the Steinbeckian 'Okies'. And the findings reached here indicate that this influence is enormous, affecting the novel's characters on at least three different levels: on the level of their relation to nature, on the level of their relation to themselves, and on the level of their relation to others.

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RESUMO

A FILOSOFIA DE EMERSON EM *AS VINHAS DA IRA*
DO JOHN STEINBECK

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A filosofia de Ralph Waldo Emerson é a voz seminal dos Estados Unidos no século dezenove, e ainda está profundamente enraizada na cultura americana. Ela reflete as idéias dos Transcendentalistas Americanos, um grupo de escritores românticos de Nova Inglaterra, que acreditavam que a intuição era o caminho para vida, que Deus se revela através da intuição para cada indivíduo. A filosofia de Emerson também celebra a independência individual, que está freqüentemente em conflito com qualquer autoridade imposta, quer seja ela religiosa ou secular. Sua variedade de individualismo, entretanto, cresce a partir da conexão intuitiva do 'eu' com a Superalma e não é apenas uma questão de afirmação centrada no 'eu' ou no narcisismo imaturo. Com efeito, as idéias de Emerson parecem encontrar uma vasta, se não dominante, passagem no livro *As Vinhas da Ira* de John Steinbeck. Esta dissertação tenta determinar até que ponto a filosofia Emersoniana contida em *Nature*, "Self-Reliance", "The American Scholar" e "An Address" afeta as vidas dos 'Okies' Steinbeckianos. Os resultados obtidos aqui indicam que esta influencia é enorme, afetando os personagens do romance em pelo menos três níveis diferentes: no nível de suas relações com a natureza, no nível de suas relações consigo mesmos, e no nível de suas relações com os outros.

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INTRODUCTION

1. Statement of Problem

The migration of thousands of bankrupt and hungry Oklahoma farmers, or "Okies", to California during the Dust Bowl, presented with the eyes and experiences of the Joad family in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, expresses "social despair and political indignation at the way failure and decay breed a harvest of wrath" (Bradbury 111). Despite some accusations of the novel being collectivist propaganda, the book seems to be mainly founded on the theme of biological evolution. This evolution can be traced to Ralph Waldo Emerson's idea of transcendentalism—a nineteenth-century New England doctrine that simultaneously demands of man individualism and selfless altruism (French 1961; Preface); a doctrine that is based on reasoning from the power of will and inspiration; and a doctrine that is opposed to materialism, or reasoning from history, facts, and the animal drives of man. According to this philosophy, in addition, man is closely related to nature, and becomes part of a universal soul, a God almost, when surrendering himself to intuition and the power of nature. Emersonian man, finally, does not stoop to imitating or conforming to societal caution; on the contrary—he does not shun duty, acts on his impulses, and, most of all, preserves at all cost the integrity of his mind. All these ideas seem to find a reflection in Steinbeck's novel, merging into an organic whole and "find[ing] embodiment in [the Joads'] character and action, so that they seem no longer ideas, but facts" (Steinbeck 1972; 709).

2. Context of Investigation

The influence of Emersonian philosophy on John Steinbeck's novel shall be analyzed in this thesis in respect to the following four works: *An Address*, *Nature* (the book), *Self-Reliance*, and *The American Scholar*. Occasionally, also, references will be made to other Emerson essays, principally to *Society and Solitude* and *Farming*.

2.1. *An Address*

The main theme of *An Address* is the impact intuition has on human life. Perception is reflected in the form of instinctive optimism as well as in the doctrine of the Over-Soul, or Spirit, which allows man to get temporarily united with the souls of all people. The Over-Soul, like intuition itself, is highly selective, and can only be acquired through another soul. It cannot be adopted or modified – it is either accepted in its entirety or rejected. Intuition, then, is not only "the embalmer of the world" (70), but also a form of religion – it absolves man of the 'original sin', making him tantamount to God. Such "beatitude of man" (70), in turn, is his source of inspiration and power, and leads him to perform heroic deeds, often at the cost of abandonment or even the loss of his own life. The lack of intuition, conversely, degrades man's life, damaging his relation to himself, to nature, and to other people. The traditional notion of sin is one example of such perversion since it is based on Understanding, or tradition. Christianity has thwarted, then, any attempts to "communicate" (73) religion with people as it dwells inordinately on the supernatural, "the personal, the positive, [and] the ritual" (73), rather than promoting the doctrine of the Over-Soul, the love of humanity, and the reverence for man's life.

2.2. *Nature*

Nature is the result of Emerson's experimental thought, summarizing most of his philosophical assumptions. In it, apart from enumerating and explaining several uses of

nature, Emerson delves into the relationship between nature and the soul, essentially trying to answer the question whether man is a passive student, benefiting from nature's advice, or whether he is a completely new entity that is capable of constructing his own world (Marr 44). The conclusion he reaches is that man has a considerable degree of flexibility in shaping his own destiny, provided he adheres to his inner call of Spirit, or the instinctive love for all people. The most important statement Emerson makes in *Nature* is that man becomes one with God when he lets nature absorb him. Achieving such unity, however, requires—both physical and spiritual abandonment. Imperative in this unity is also man's ability to integrate his inward and outward senses, that is, to perceive nature's various components as one. Such ability is greatly facilitated by the distant powers of the eye, and is particularly available to the eye of a child and a poet due to their simultaneous innocence and sophistication. Another conclusion reached in the book is that human nature is based primarily on perception, and not on experience. It is the soul which determines what we are, allowing man to become united with nature and with the souls of other people. Experience, or Understanding, on the other hand only "mars this faith" (27), damaging the relationship between the seer and the seen, thus preventing man from perceiving beauty in the common nature.

2.3. *Self-Reliance*

Self-Reliance is the pinnacle of Emerson's individualism as well as his declaration of intellectual independence. Man is supreme to him—he is self-reliant and representative of his age; he is a leader and the center of nature; he does not imitate, but follows instead his original thought. He also has a considerable amount of freedom of action at his disposal – he does what he has to do, often rejecting moral, ethical, or religious standards. The Emersonian man is neither afraid of being criticized or expressing his own wrath as he

believes in telling the plain truth always and inspiring others. He is also a hard-worker since work allows him to realize his genius and retrieve his peace of mind. Emerson's man, moreover, is not afraid of competing against other individuals as he instinctively adheres to the Darwinist principle of the survival of the fittest. Last but not least, he eschews showing sympathy, and rarely asks for help or accepts charity. Emersonian man, in addition, is highly critical of society, which, generally, only strengthens his conformity and kills his individualism. Society, also, is always in the state of perpetual change – its unity is short-lived, just as short-lived are people and their experience. It never advances or can be improved because "For everything that is given something is taken" (166). This view, in turn, reflects Emerson's 'law of compensation', according to which, an increase at one end automatically results in a decrease at the other, and vice versa. Such fluctuation is reflected, for example, in technological progress as well as in man's excessive dependence on property, both of which may bring him more harm than good, by disassociating him from his work and nature. Self-reliance, finally, should be everybody's guiding principle as far as religion is concerned. Traditional church dogmas are obsolete and tainted with tradition, being either too confusing or phantasmagoric. Likewise, prayer must not be used as a tool for private ends or as a way of expiation, but rather it should incorporate the infinite vision of Spirit, that is, reflect ultimate goodness – love.

2.4. *The American Scholar*

The intuitive doctrine of the Over-Soul is also one of the main issues of *The American Scholar*. There is one man, says Emerson, who is representative to all. His soul reflects the universal soul, which allows him to get united with the souls of all people. What damages this bond, however, is a deeply divided, impotent and egoistic society, turning man into a dissociated-from-nature machine, and depriving him of his original purpose as well as the

enthusiasm for his profession. The scholar's purpose, therefore, is to retrieve this lost unity, and one way of going about this is through the observation of nature. For nature affects his mind demonstrating, contrary to his initial assessment, that things are not loose and individual, but unified and whole. And the source of this oneness is again the Over-Soul – it complements nature, or answers to it "part for part" (48). Another major influence on the scholar's mind is action, serving both as an inspiration to his intellect and the source of his power. Being able to undertake decisive action is particularly important to the members of clergy, who tend to be too effeminate and detached from common people. Action, finally, is the scholar's best teacher, educating his senses and perseverance alike. Its benefits are especially conspicuous in work, shaping man's character and inspiring him to live. The Emersonian scholar, finally, has several duties. One of them is to "embrace the common" (61), since the common is related to nature. The common also provides him with necessary intuition, helping him understand and become one with nature. The scholar's main responsibility, however, is to instinctively show people the way, to be their leader. In order to prepare oneself for this task, one must choose the path of poverty and abandonment. This involves not only sacrificing one's own indecision, but frequently even "forgo[ing] the living for the dead" (55). The ultimate reward for all these sacrifices is the mastery of human nature. By rising above private concerns, the scholar attains ultimate freedom—"He is the world's eye. He is the world's heart" (56).

2. Review of Literature

Steinbeck's literary relationship with Emerson has been pointed out on several occasions, notably by Carpenter, French, Levant, and Lisca. Carpenter—the pioneer of this criticism—notices in *The Philosophical Joads* that the creation of Casy is key to understanding Steinbeck's novel. The preacher, Carpenter says, not only determines and

directs the lives of the Joads, but also continues the thought of the great American writers—Emerson's mystical transcendentalism, Whitman's democracy, and William James' instrumentalism (1972; 709). Like Emerson, who was publicly branded as a heretic by the church he represented, and consequently barred from public speaking at Harvard Divinity College for nearly half a century, Casy quits preaching due to his unorthodoxy. Both ex-preachers continue to preach, however, long after their official 'divorce' from the church, with Casy embracing in simple words Emerson's idea of the universal unity of people connected intuitively by one soul. "And so the Emersonian oversoul", Carptenter emphasizes, "comes to earth in Oklahoma" (Steinbeck 1972; 710).

The author of *The Philosophical Joads* also notices Casy's feeling of identity with nature. Like the Emersonian man, he says, Casy goes into the wilderness in order to save his soul (710), realizing like his Concord counterpart "that holiness, or goodness, results from this feeling of unity" (710). Emersonian relationship with nature, or "ecological balance" (1972; 754) in *The Grapes of Wrath* is also observed by Carlson, who sees in the novel's first chapter, for instance, "the elemental forces in nature turn[ing] into dust and death" (754). Man's relationship with Nature, Carlson continues, is visible not only in his reliance on the "primal elements" (755), like water, sun, fire, and land, but also in "the epic nature of sex, womanhood, family life, death, mutualism of spirit, and the epic idea of the race of man" (755). Reed is of a similar view, saying that "The commonplace details of indigent life [in Steinbeck's novel] magnify in importance because of their consequences" (1972; 833). Even death and killing, he says, are essential in the Joads' education and their ultimate survival. Finally, Tom and Rose of Sharon's identifications with humanity, Carlson adds, "underscore the epic idea that all men are brothers because all men belong to

the Race of Man. This transcendent yet real unity of spirit is clearly more than a 'biological approach to ethics'" (755).

Carpenter, moreover, believes that Steinbeck's Casy, like Emerson himself, becomes aware of the threat of destruction of this universal unity by human egoism, which can only be countered by spontaneous love (1972; 711). Like Emerson, Carpenter continues, "he almost welcomes 'the dear old devil.' Now he fears not the lusts of the flesh but rather the lusts of the spirit. For the abstract lust of possession isolates a man from his fellows and destroys the unity of nature and the love of man" (711). The new moral of the novel, then, "is that the love of all people—if it be unselfish—may even supersede the love of family" (715). Carlson and Fontenrose would feel compelled to agree. For the former, Casy's death signifies "a love that risked death even as Tom assumes Casy's mission at the same risk… [, and is] channeled by a democratic sense of social justice and a realistic sense of pragmatic action…" (1972; 752). The latter expresses a similar opinion, adding in "The Grapes of Wrath" that the Emersonian doctrine of love is imbedded in Casy's rejection of Uncle John's Christianity. Like Emerson, Fonterose says, Casy replaces his previous notion of sin by that of spontaneous love (796). Such a doctrine signifies the unity of not only the "family, corporation, union, state," according to Fontenrose, but also of "mankind as a whole, embracing all the rest" (796), reflecting therefore "a transcendental version of the social-organism theory" (796).

Casy's connection with Emerson's doctrine of the Over-Soul is also mentioned by Lisca and Carlson. The former attributes Casy's Christ-like development to the Joads' experiences. "As Tom moves from material resentment to ethical indignation," Lisca says, "so Casy moves from purely speculative to the pragmatic. Both move from stasis to action" (1972; 745). Also Casy's abandonment bears the Emersonian influence, and is exhibited by

his renouncement of the "Bible-belt evangelism for a species of social humanism, and his congregation for the human race" (745). "His development," Lisca continues, "like that of Tom, is symbolic of the changing social conditions…, paralleling the development of the Joad family as a whole…" (745). Casy, then, resembles Emerson because like Emerson he discovers the intuitive doctrine of the Over-Soul, while simultaneously rejecting his congregation so that he "preach to the world" (745). Carlson also alleges that *The Grapes of Wrath* belongs primarily to the American democratic tradition, but unlike Lisca, he dismisses the notion that the novel is based on Christian tradition. "Like Emerson," he says, "Casy gives up the church and becomes a humble free-thinking seeker of the truth, relying on observation, shared experience, natural sympathy, and natural introspection and insight" (751). Taylor agrees with Carlson, saying in "*The Grapes of Wrath* Reconsidered" that, "Contrary to Christian dualism, man and man's world are looked on, Transcendental fashion, as part of one great Soul, universally holy except when some 'mis'able little fella' acts in arrogant self-assertion to 'bust the holiness'" (1972; 759). Nevertheless, Carlson shares Carpenter's and Lisca's view that Casy's revelation is tied to the experiences of the Joads, and is based on the universal love of "his fellow man" (751). Casy's faith, Carlson continues, is consistent with four Emersonian ideas: "(1) a belief in the brotherhood of man, manifesting itself as "love"…; (2) a belief in the spirit-of-man as the over-soul or Holy Spirit shared by all men in their outgoing love; (3) a belief in the unity of man and nature; and (4) an acceptance of all life as an expression of spirit" (751). These beliefs, according to Carlson, constitute Casy's "ideal spiritual values" (751), representing "the ideal unity of common purpose (spirit) when men strive together toward a worthy goal in harmony with nature (the way of life)" (751). Casy's vision, then, does not rely on the Christian God, but rather on "Emerson's Brahma" (751).

Emerson's influence on Steinbeck's novel is also noticed by Reed in "*The Grapes of Wrath* and the Esthetics of Indigence". Reed bases his claim on Steinbeck's own acceptance speech of his Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962, whereby the author of *The Grapes of Wrath* says that a writer is obliged to "celebrate man's proven capacity for greatness of heart and spirit" (ctd. in 1972; 827). And more, Steinbeck continues, "[A] writer who does not passionately believe in the perfectibility of man has no dedication nor any membership in literature" (826). To Reed, therefore, *The Grapes of Wrath* is a "marriage of man's 'faults and failures with his own 'greatness of heart and spirit'" (827), and is epitomized by Casy—"…the wandering, homeless preacher, [who] becomes the attendant spirit of these wandering and homeless people" (833). "[I]t is this human spirit of idealism" Reed continues, "that will leaven and transform commonplace people like the Joads" (833) into selfless heroes, as Rose of Sharon's breast-feeding gesture demonstrates (839). "[T]he final, emblematic tableau, arrested at the moment between life and death," Reed closes his essay, "unites animal necessity with the high achievements of the human spirit" (839).

The Emersonian notion of Spirit is also mentioned by Howard Levant, who believes that is it more of an "emotional release" (119) than the awareness of sin. Like French (1961, 1966), Levant acknowledges the novel's transcendental underpinnings in Tom's final speech: "This anthropomorphic insight," Levant says, "borrowed…remotely from Emerson, is a serious idea, put seriously within the allegorical framework of the novel's close" (122). The Joads, he says, undergo a lengthy process of the education of the heart (124), from "a self-contained, self-sustaining unit to a conscious part of a group, a whole larger than its parts" (98). In order to prove his claim, Levant makes the following differentiation between a group and a group-man: "The group is quite different [from a

group-man]—rational, stable, relatively calm—because it is an assemblage of like-minded people who retain their individual and traditional sense of right and wrong as a natural fact. Group-man lacks a moral dimension; the group is a morally pure instrument of power" (98). Incidentally, a similar comparison is made by Steinbeck himself: "…the group has a soul, a drive, an intent, an end, a method, a reaction and a set of tropisms which in no way resembles the same things possessed by the men who make up the group" (ctd. in Bradbury 109). Carpenter would quite agree with such a view. To him, the Steinbeckian individual from *The Grapes of Wrath*, like his Emersonian counterpart, plays a significant role within the group. Although he is "concerned more with his private soul than with other people" (1972; 712), he, "By virtue of his wholehearted participation in this new group [,] may become greater than himself" (713). Most people will obviously always be only individuals, like Tom's sex-obsessed teenage brother, but some, by working hard within a group will become the Emersonian 'representative men'. And Tom, Carpenter says, is one such leader, deriving his power from "his increased sense of participation in the group" (713).

Levant, finally, considers *The Grapes of Wrath* to have a sanguine overall tone, despite the fact that the survival of the Joads is "less than glowingly optimistic" (90). One of the main reasons of this optimism is the educative and toughening natural process of experience (99). "If the novel is to have any more significance than a reportorial narrative of travel and hardship," Levant concludes, "Casy's spiritual insights are a necessary means of stating a convincing philosophical optimism" (103). Bradbury shares a similar view, admitting in *The Modern American Novel* (1992) that Steinbeck's book is based on American transcendentalism, or "the Emersonian idealism of those who saw a unified soul in man and in nature, and who sought that soul's deliverance in a new America seen as

paradisial Eden, where life returns to innocence and to its primal sources" (110). Bradbury continues: "Steinbeck's are novels of human participation in society and nature; moral crimes occur when human needs are blocked by institutions" (110). About *The Grapes of Wrath*, he comments:

> …it is in fact one of the most optimistic of modern American novels – an epic narrative mural, its figures expressionistic, and larger than life, the momentum mythical, and the foundation a biological evolutionism expressing Steinbeck's theories of instinctive collective existence. Two myths govern the book. One is of hopeful American westering, seen as the journey from bondage to the promised land; the other is of heroic evolution, mankind's vital journey from solitude to selfhood in community. (111)

In *The Grapes of Wrath,* Steinbeck thus shifts from biological and political naturalism into "primitive mysticism," or, as Steinbeck calls it himself, the "phalanx of human emotions" (ctd. in Bradbury 110). The biggest strength of his novel, Bradbury sums up, is its "power and the transcendental hope that had made [it] not only a work of social protest but a work of modern epic proportions seeking, and expressing…a distilling, Emersonian oneness" (112). This optimism, as Arvin and Parkes observe, results to a considerable extent from Emerson's lack of the "Vision of Evil" (Konvitz 47). Suffering to him, they maintain in separate essays, is "a kind of illusion" (48) and has no absolute reality. Emerson sees evil, just like he sees goodness—as non-realities, or negations (Konvitz 127); it is nature alone that performs the function of a moral judge (128). Emerson's optimism, however, as Arvin stipulates in *The House of Pain*, is more the result of his "intellectual and emotional discipline" (Konvitz 50) than of his unawareness of evil since even during his artistic maturity there are undertones in his thought which indicate a certain polarization of this

optimism. On the one hand, Emerson celebrates "the powers of the human will"; on the other, he insists on its shortcomings, or "the forces in nature that are not friendly but hostile and even destructive to human wishes, and on the discrepancy between what a man aspires to do and what nature and circumstance allow him to do" (51). Such treatment of the tragic, Arvin writes, requires a lot of courage, and that is what makes Emerson great. It was Emerson's conscious choice—"he did not simply *find* himself there…he had got beyond Tragedy…because he had *moved* beyond it" (55). He rejected tragedy not because he was incapable of it, but because he believed that tragedy "belonged in the world of appearance, of the relative, of illusion; not in the realm of transcendental reality and truth in which Emerson faith was complete" (57). A similar belief is expressed in *The Grapes of Wrath*, according to French, by the Okies' attitude towards organized religion. Religion is seen in the novel "a kind of affliction….amounting to what one tells…oneself" (1966; 109). Sin, then, becomes relative, depending on one's perception (109). Although Steinbeck partly acknowledges the difference between right and wrong, by admitting for instance that the existence of migrant camps depends on the preservation of certain rights and rejection of others, he nevertheless does not prescribe a correct or incorrect behavior (109). Just like transcendentalists, who believed that "man in his natural state, uncorrupted by civilized institutions, tended to do the right thing..., Steinbeck never attempts to codify these rights or to explain how a system for seeing that they are observed will operate" (109).

To French, the novel's theology is "remarkably" (1961; Preface) consistent with that of the nineteenth-century American transcendentalism. To him, Jim Casy's notion of the holiness of all people as well as the unreality of sin "seem less a product of his own narrowly doctrinaire age than a latter-day wanderer from the green village of Concord to the dry plains of the West" (1966; 157). Steinbeck's novel, French continues in *The Social*

Novel at the End of an Era, is based on the long American tradition of individualism that bears a striking resemblance to "the doctrine of self-reliance that distinguished the works of Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman as among the first efforts to forge a distinctly American ideology" (157). What kept him from committing himself fully to the transcendental cause, according to French, was his belief in "the primacy of human dignity" (1961; Preface). It was this "Transcendental idealism", French continues, that provided Steinbeck with a "vigorous compassion," making *The Grapes of Wrath* "both socially and artistically significant" (Preface). French proceeds to compare Steinbeck to Emerson, noting that the former possessed the three major things that, according to the latter, make up a true scholar: nature, books, and action. "He heeded, intentionally or not," French says of Steinbeck, "Emerson's injunctions about the roles of each" (20). Especially the last aspect, Steinbeck took particularly to heart in his desire to become a writer: "he…was more active than perhaps even Emerson dreamed of….He worked on ranches, joined a road-building gang, worked in the laboratory of a sugar-beet factory, and even helped build Madison Square Garden" (21). Not surprisingly, then, French rebuffs the accusations of many critics that *The Grapes of Wrath* is a call for collectivity or class struggle, citing various examples of the Joads' flaws, including ignorance, thoughtlessness, suspiciousness, and impetuousness. Such "unvarnished portrait of the unloveliness of the Okies" (1961; 99), as French puts it, is a conspicuous feature of Steinbeck's non-teleological thinking:

> [Steinbeck] argues against acquired selfishness, not inherent evil, and he recognizes that since neither side in the quarrel has any monopoly on vice or virtue, the migrants…must also change if they are to survive. What he has written, therefore, in not a *static* novel about long-suffering Joads, but a

> *dynamic* novel about people who learn that survival depends upon their adaptability to new conditions. (99)

The novel, then, French continues, is not a "sociological prophecy" or "the family's quest for security", but rather "the education of the heart, one that results in a change from their jealously regarding themselves as an isolated and self-important family unit to their regarding themselves as part of a vast human family…" (101). One of the best examples of such education is Ma's painstaking transformation from the bulwark of the family into responsibility that goes much beyond familial obligations (107). She puts this education into practice, French says, by her unspoken gesture to her daughter to breast-feed a starved man lying in the barn in which the Joads find a temporary refuge from the flood (107). The scene, thus, logically closes the Joads' education as they have overcome their "familial prejudices": "What happens to them now depends upon the ability of the rest of society to learn the same lesson ….The book is neither riddle nor tragedy—it is an epic comedy of the triumph of the "holy spirit." The Joads have not yet been saved from physical privation, but they have saved themselves from spiritual bigotry" (107).

Another discussed issue that is relevant to the "Emersonian" *The Grapes of Wrath* is the idea of freedom. And many a literary critic, including Frost, Matthiessen (66), Parks, and Taylor, tends to be wary of the two writers' notion of freedom. The main reason for their apprehension is, as Frost puts it, "getting too transcended" (Konvitz 15), or swaying too closely towards moral anarchy. According to Parkes, Emerson's philosophy has contributed to modern day liberalism, which is based on a premise that people do not need any imposed system of values to guide them in life. People are most happy, he says, when they are freely able to choose their own form of self-expression (Konvitz 133). "[I]n attacking", however "outworn and obstructive forms of authority," Parkes accuses,

"[Emersonian liberals] have denied the need for objective moral standards of any kind; declaring that each man has a right to free self-development, they have forgotten that when values are no longer imposed by external authority, they must instead be adopted voluntarily by the individual" (134). Taylor would quite likely agree with such a statement, saying that the Okies' attitude toward life condones "any simple, easy, and natural indulgence" (1972; 759). In the Okies' world, Taylor says in "*The Grapes of Wrath* Reconsidered", "there is no need for self-control; all is permitted. To act ethically men have only to act naturally. They have only to forget the illusion of sin, practice a universal tolerance, and obey impulse" (759). Frost cautions against such unlimited freedom, too, comparing freedom in his essay *On Emerson* to "departure—setting forth—leaving things behind, brave origination of the courage to be new" (Konvitz 15). Such conceived freedom, he warns, is only "one jump ahead of formal laws, as in planes and even automobiles right now" (15). It involves sacrificing one attraction for another, and the only judge to define the meaning and scope of such freedom are people themselves. The biggest pitfall of this instinctive disloyalty, according to Frost, is falling into the trap of anarchy—"There are limits", he says, "Let's not talk socialism" (15). And this kind of limitless freedom is what Steinbeckian 'Okies' might be accused of by Frost:

> The kind of story Steinbeck likes to tell is about an old labor hero punch-drunk from fighting the police in many strikes, beloved by everybody at headquarters as the greatest living hater of tyranny. I take it that the production line was his grievance. The only way he could make it mean anything was to try to ruin it. He took arms and fists against it. No one could have given him that kind of freedom. He saw it as his to seize. He was no freedman; he was a free man. The one inalienable right is to go to

> destruction in your own way. What's worth living for is worth dying for. What's worth succeeding in is worth failing in. (Konvitz 15)

A different view on Emerson's and Steinbeck's freedom is presented by Aaron and French, respectively. The former argues that Emerson does not mean his political views to be a springboard to anarchy, despite admitting that intuition encourages assertive individualism (Konvitz 95). "If it encouraged the predatory entrepreneur," Aaron claims, "it also invalidated contracts. It dissolved the power of tyrannical authority; it undermined tradition" (Konvitz 96). Emerson's criticism of the state for its obstructive role notwithstanding, he opposes government only "when it prevented men from living naturally and wisely and justly" (96). And more—Emerson considers government's role as essential in protecting its citizens and providing them with work (96). Therefore, he should be construed as a reformer, not a revolutionary:

> [His] program must in no way be construed as incendiary attacks against private property or the family or the state. Society, [he] felt, needed to be reformed, to be brought into closer correspondence with American democratic precepts; it did not need to be uprooted. To conserve the best and eradicate the wrong, to redirect the social energies without disturbing fundamental social laws, to maintain an open society and to oppose the tendencies in national life that made for rigid class stratifications….(98)

Similarly, French (1961) argues that Steinbeck's novel is not an attempt to change the existing political system, but only a wish to make the necessary repairs to it (97). It is a novel, he says, that is "based on a non-teleological concept of the survival of the fittest, threatening those who persisted in oppressing the less fortunate with destruction at the hands of the aroused oppressed" (98). In order to understand *The Grapes of Wrath*,

therefore, its author must be interpreted as a "reformer", not a Marxist as "his forebodings were prompted by biological not theological considerations" (98). Despite Steinbeck's considerable leniency toward organized government, French argues, he never suggests that the government should solve the whole burden of the migrants' problem—"He never suggests that the migrants should have remained in Oklahoma and sought federal relief, since he is arguing not that the government solve problems but that individuals should learn from experience" (110).

Emersonian and Steinbeckian freedom, in addition, tries to break with tradition. Parkes blames Emerson for such an attempt because, ironically, a stable and well-organized society is based on it (121). Neither is Marr indifferent to such a threat, but unlike Parkes, he ascribes it to the American democracy itself. He is of an opinion that the American tradition, be it intellectual, social, or political "bows before the pulverizing demands arising from mass social conditions" (58). As a result, democracy, with its inherent social equality, simultaneously eradicates the sense of the past and produces a new contradictory social character—"isolation amid great numbers, atomization spewing forth from solidarity, community forever elusive", which in turn "fills men with illusions of self-sufficiency, myths of masterless man" (57-58). The self, thus, absorbs the political meaning of freedom, serving, at the same token, as the solution to political concerns (Marr 60). "By the time the thread of tradition finally snapped in the twentieth-century European mind," Marr says, "Emersonianism itself had become an American tradition of thought and practice" (60-61). Aaron agrees, saying in *Emerson and the Progressive Tradition* that democracy destroys people's traditional societal bond, and that one of the outcomes of such a break is their forced solitude (Konvitz 88). Maybe this is the reason why, French suggests, Steinbeck's characters find it so difficult to "come to terms with the modern world" (1966; 168), since

as he says "Steinbeck could not bring himself to depict the sensitive individual as able to survive without withdrawing from the modern world" (168).

Another issue pertaining both to the Emersonian man and to Steineck's migrants is mutability. It is the result, Marr says, of "America's…capacity for dynamic renewal that causes the past to be obliterated at the very moment of its inception" (60). Under such conditions, the mind of the Emersonian man cannot "wander in obscurity" forever since "it is immediately driven back upon itself in a desperate affirmation of inner freedom" (Marr 60). Man's mutability and renewal also reflect a broader mutability in nature. Levant notices such renewal in *The Grapes of Wrath* in the turtle's inadvertent dropping of the seed as well as in the figures of Ruthie and Winfield, who are "planted" and will perhaps take root in the new environment of California (102). Rose of Sharon's pregnancy has a similar allegorical meaning. Although her baby is born dead, Levant continues, its birth implies the birth of compassion (102). The renewal of life, in addition, Taylor observes in "*The Grapes of Wrath* Reconsidered", is manifested in the Okies' obsession with casual sex. It reflects a doctrine that puts the only value on "experiences of the moment" (1972; 760), whereby "the only valid end of living is the continued renewing of the life of the life cells" (760). Last but not least, Emerson and Steinbeck's Okies' changeability can be seen in their courage to contradict themselves. "No great writer is ever rectilinear—is ever unequivocal or free from contradictions—and Emerson," says Arvin, "who consciously disbelieved in straight lines and single poles, is at least as resistant to simple formulas as most" (Konvitz 50). Whicher agrees in *Emerson's Tragic Sense*, saying the following about the Concord sage: "He taught self-reliance and felt self-distrust, worshipped reality and knew illusion, proclaimed freedom and submitted to fate" (Konvitz 39). Whicher goes on to compare Emerson's dualism to that of Steinbeck, both of whom "had to have entire

assurance, or he had none at all" (45), with this exception, however, that the latter has not "risen to [the] transcendental trust," of the former, accepting instead "shoddy substitutes" (44).

As far as the issue of property is concerned, Reed says in "*The Grapes of Wrath* and the Esthetics of Indigence", Steinbeck, similarly to Emerson, is of an opinion that "the less encumbered a man is by possessions, the more easily will he find his own soul" (1972; 829). "Possessions, for Steinbeck," Reed continues, "are accretions that smother the spiritual life," as indicated by him in his portrayal of middle-class tourists (829). Such a view is congruent with Aaron's, who observes that Emerson's followers tend to put "spiritual values above material ones and human considerations above the rights of property" (Konvitz 97). They want, Aaron continues, not only "a more equitable distribution of wealth produced by the new technology" and the preservation of "the integrity of 'souls' suffocating in the impersonal fog of the market system", but also the elimination of the evils related to industrialism (97). What repels them about the industrial revolution and its capitalistic methods are "[T]he shabby and sordid slums, creeping like an infection across the face of their cities…, the intemperance and pauperism and vice that inevitably accompanied the overcrowding of towns and deadened human sympathies" (97).

Finally, at least one critic of *The Grapes of Wrath* is not oblivious to the Emersonian utility of work. As Covici notes in "Work and the Timelines of *The Grapes of Wrath*", work serves in the novel as "a stabilizing force", not only economically but also psychologically and socially (1972; 817). It helps the guilt-stricken Uncle John, for example, calm down when building a dam in order to prevent the box cars from being flooded during Rose of Sharon's expected delivery; he would rather work himself to death, than to recall his wife's own painful "travail" (818). "Building a dam," Covici maintains,

"futile though it turns out to be against the tangible flood, provides a welcome psychological alternative to 'doin' nothin'…" (818). Convici also points out to the danger of man's disassociation from work, if he is replaced or aided by the tractor. In such a case, a tractor man, he says, becomes "a mere extension of the job" (817), a machine almost. "To work is to do well;" Covici wraps up in his closing statements, "the very roots of man's respect lie in his capacity to find, perform, and keep on performing a job of useful work….Give a man work he understands, work he can do as well as he thinks it should be done, and he's a satisfied man" (819). And, "Work feels good; take away the chance to this good feeling, and the grapes of wrath begin their fermentation" (820).

3. Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate to what extent Emerson's philosophy contained in his "Self-Reliance", *Nature*, and "The American Scholar", and "An Address" is present in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. Specifically, this work will attempt to verify the scope of Emersonian ideas in the novel at three different levels: man's relationship to nature, his relation to himself, and his relationship to other people. In the first content chapter, Man's Relationship to Nature, I shall discuss the application of Emerson's three uses of nature, including Commodity, Beauty, and Discipline. The fourth Emersonian use—Language—shall be excluded in this thesis, not because of the scarcity of symbolic devices in the novel, but due to their overlapping with other relevant issues analyzed here. I shall also discuss in that chapter the two major applications of intuition; namely, Optimism and the Over-Soul, especially from the perspective that has not been, to the best of my knowledge, sufficiently dealt with by literary criticism. In the second content chapter, or Chapter III, man's relation to himself shall be analyzed, in particular, as it relates to man's independence, to his religious self-reliance, and to his mutability. Finally,

in Chapter IV, I shall examine man's relationship to other people and to society in general, specifically as it pertains to the issues of abandonment, sympathy towards others, and the attitude towards the common man. Last but not least, Emersonian leadership qualities shall be looked into in the same chapter, followed the thesis' conclusion.

CHATPER II

Man's Relationship to Nature

1. The Uses of Nature

As Matthiessen points out in *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman*, modern age literature has experienced the return of man to Nature, marrying and subjugating it to his mind, as opposed to Nature's deification in the Greek age or its fear and evil during the Christian age (160). Emerson's *Nature* is no different—it develops a dualism of thought between culture and nature, from which human nature is defined (Marr 44). Nature, understood by Emerson as "NOT ME", and signifying both "essences unchanged by man" (Emerson 4) as well as incorporating art, all the people and their bodies (4), possesses many important utilities. Namely, it serves man as a Commodity, as Beauty, and as Discipline.

1.1. Nature as a Commodity

Commodity, says Emerson in *Nature*, includes "all those advantages which our senses owe to nature" (7). Nature serves man not only as a raw material, but also as a process and outcome: "The wind sows the seed; the sun evaporates the sea; the wind blows the vapor to the field; the ice, on the other side of the planet, condenses rain on this; the rain feeds the plant; the plant feeds the animal; and thus the endless circulations of the divine charity nourish man" (*Nature* 8). Nature as a process is also in abundant supply in Steinbeck's novel. One of its examples is shown by a river in California, on the banks of which the tired Joads decide to take a rest before crossing the desert. The river not only washes and cools off their bodies, but also offers refuge and sustenance for Noah Joad, who chooses to abandon his family there: "I'll catch fish" he says, "Fella can't starve beside a nice river"

(221). Another example of nature as a commodity is portrayed in the description of the fertile valleys in California:

> And all the time the fruit swells and the flowers break out in long clusters on the vines. And in the growing year the warmth grows and the leaves turn dark green. The prunes lengthen like little green birds' eggs, and the limbs sag down against the crutches under the weight. And the hard little pears take shape, and the beginning of the fuzz comes out on the peaches. Grape-blossoms shed their tiny petals and the hard little beads become green buttons, and the buttons grow heavy….The short, lean wheat has been made big and productive. Little sour apples have grown large and sweet, and that old grape that grew among the trees and fed the birds, its tiny fruit has mothered a thousand varieties, red and black, green and pale pink, purple and yellow; and each variety with its own flavour. (367; ch. 25)

Even more importantly, nature's benefits serve a broader purpose – they give people work: "A man is fed," Emerson stipulates in *Nature*, "not that he may be fed, but that he may work" (9). Work, in turn, he adds in *Self-Reliance*, brings them inner tranquility and self-realization: "A man is relieved and gay when he has put his heart into his work and done his best; but what he has said or done otherwise shall give him no peace….no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his soil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till" (146). Even the most menial work is beneficial: "There is virtue yet in the hoe and the spade," Emerson writes in *The American Scholar*, "for learned as well as for unlearned hands" (55). Such satisfaction from work can be seen in *The Grapes of Wrath*, for example, when Tom lays his hands on a pickaxe for the first time since his release from jail—"Jumping Jesus!" he says, "If she don't feel good" (314; ch.

22)! And later that day Tom exclaims—"Damn it…, a pick is a nice tool (*umph*), if you don't fight it (*umph*). You an' the pick (*umph*) workin' together (*umph*)" (316). Pa Joad expresses a similar excitement on the opportunity of cotton picking: "By God, I'd like get my hands on some cotton! There's work I un'erstan'" (428; ch. 26). To some 'Okies', cotton picking even amounts to sensual pleasure: "I'm a good hand with cotton. Finer-wise, boll-wise. Jes' move along talkin', an' maybe singin' till the bag gets heavy. Fingers go right to it. Fingers know. Eyes see the work – and don't see it" (430). Work brings not only satisfaction to the migrants, but is also the driving force for all people, according to the novel's narrator: "…muscles aching to work, minds aching to create beyond the single need – this is man. To build a wall, to build a house, a dam, and in the wall and house and dam to put something of Manself, and to Manself take back something of the wall, the house, the dam; to take hard muscles from the lifting, to take clear and form conceiving" (160). And the Joads put this constant craving for work into practice by leaving voluntarily, for instance, a relatively cozy government camp. Their desire for work cannot be quelled even by any form of religious faith, as Tom notices in Chapter 20: "Prayer never brought in no side-meat. Takes a shoat to bring in pork" (265). Casy agrees: "An' Almighty God never raises no wages….They [common people] wanta eat an' get drunk and work. An' that's it – they wanta jus' fling their goddamn muscles aroun' an' get tired" (265).

This delicate balance between nature and the work it provides is threatened, however, with the introduction of the machine**.** Science, according to Emerson, can never fully replace man because it lacks humanity (37). What is more, it can do him more harm than good, he adds in *Self-Reliance*, by depriving him of his proper relation to nature (167). All the great inventions become obsolete sooner or later, Emerson continues, but "[T]he great genius returns to essential man" (168). Similar thinking is present in *The Grapes of Wrath*,

whereby the machine is represented by the tractor and scientific progress by commercial farming. They not only deprive man of work, but also damage his relation with it. One of the evicted tenant farmers explains this in Chapter 5: "One man on a tractor can take the place of twelve or fourteen families" (38). The same accusation is later repeated by the narrator, who compares the menace of the tractor with the menace of the tank: "But this tractor does two things – it turns the land and turns us off the land. There is little difference between this tractor and a tank. The people are driven, intimidated, hurt by both" (Steinbeck 161). The damage done by the tractor to man's relationship with his work and nature can also be best seen in the portrayal of the driver of that tractor:

> He could not see the land as it was, he could not smell the land as it smelled: his feet did not stamp the clods or feel the warmth and power of the earth….He did not know or own or trust or beseech the land. If a seed dropped did not germinate, it was nothing. If the young thrusting plant withered in drought or drowned in a flood of rain, it was no more to the driver than to the tractor. (41)

When the tractor stops its work, the tractor man simply goes home some "twenty miles away" (124), and "the wonder goes out of work, so efficient that the wonder goes out of land and the working of it, and with the wonder the deep understanding and the relation. And in the tractor man there grows the contempt that comes only to a stranger who has little understanding and no relation" (124). He becomes part of that monster himself – "a robot in the seat" (Steinbeck 40). Such description of the tractor driver as an automaton is consistent with Emerson's belief expressed in *The American Scholar*, whereby he accuses the farmer of having "metamorphosed into a thing" (46), or lost his original enthusiasm for his profession: "The planter, who is Man sent out into the field to gather food, is seldom

cheered by any idea of the true dignity of his ministry. He sees his bushel and his cart, and nothing beyond, and sinks into the farmer, instead of Man on the farm. (Emerson 46). This loss of enthusiasm for one's work is characteristic in Steinbeck's novel not only of the tractor man, but also of big California landowners, whose love for the land "was thinned with money, and all their fierceness dribbled away in interest until they were no longer farmers at all…'" (246; ch. 19) And the main two culprits of such an outcome are commercial farming and absentee ownership: "And it came about that owners no longer worked on their farms. They farmed on paper; and they forgot the land, the smell, the feel of it, and remembered only that they owned it, remembered only what they gained and lost by it" (246-247).

1.2. Nature as Beauty

Beauty is the second major use of Nature. The sight of common natural objects, Emerson says in *Nature*, "gives people pleasure "*in and for [itself]*; a pleasure arising from outline, color, motion, and grouping" (9). "Give me health and a day," he continues, "and I will make the pomp of emperors ridiculous. The dawn is my Assyria; the sunset and moonrise my Paphos…, broad noon shall be my England of the senses and the understanding; the night shall be my Germany of mystic philosophy and dreams" (10). Such delight arises not to a small extent thanks to the power of light, which is able to beautify even ugly or abject objects (9). The reflection of such a belief can be also traced in *The Grapes of Wrath*. In Chapter 10, for instance, the evening light enlivens the Joads' rickety truck:

> The earth contributed a light to the evening. The front of the grey, paintless house, facing the west, was luminous as the moon is. The grey dusty truck, in the yard before the door, stood out magically in this light, in the

> overdrawn perspective of a stereopticon….The ancient Hudson, with bent and scarred radiator screen, with grease in dusty globules at the worn edges of every moving part, with hub caps gone and caps of red dust in their places – this was the new hearth, the living centre of the family. (107)

Nature's beauty, in addition, is the source of psychological well being. In the presence of nature, Emerson reveals, "nothing can befall me in life—no disgrace, no calamity…which nature cannot repair" (6). Especially the sight of the horizon has such healing properties: "We are never tired, as long we can see far enough" (10). "In the tranquil landscape, and especially in the distant line of the horizon," Emerson adds in *Nature*, "man beholds somewhat as beautiful as his own nature" (7). Steinbeck's novel is no different in this respect, either. The Joads instinctively calm down on the sight of the horizon, like before their setting off west: "The people too were changed in the evening, quieted. They seemed to be a part of an organization of the unconscious. They obeyed impulses which registered only faintly in their thinking minds. Their eyes were inward and quiet, and their eyes, too, were lucent in the evening, lucent in dusty faces" (107). The ability to see the horizon and "integrate all [its] parts" (6), Emerson continues, is particularly available to children and poets:

> …few adults can see nature. Most persons do not see the sun. At least they have a very superficial seeing. The sun illuminates only the eye of the man, but shines into the eye and the heart of the child. The lover of nature is he whose inward and outward senses are still truly adjusted to each other; who has retained the spirit of infancy even into the era of manhood. (6)

The facility to appreciate nature's beauty by children and poets, then, is mainly possible thanks to their mental equilibrium, which simultaneously involves innocence and

sophistication, that is, as Paul notes in *The Angle of Vision*, "the openness of response and mature judgment" (Konvitz 167). In *The Grapes of Wrath*, such ability is expressed at the end of Chapter 18, after the Joads finally cross the murderous mountain range, having before them for the first time the bird's-eye view of a picturesque valley in California. When Ma notices the valley's natural beauty, regretting with Pa that the deceased Grampa and Granma can no longer see it, Tom immediately interjects with an Emersonian notion that the beauty of nature is perceived best by the young eye: "They was too old," he says of Grampa and Granma, "They wouldn' of saw nothing that's here. Grampa would a been a-seein' the Injuns an' the prairie country when he was a young fella. An' Granma would a remembered an' seen the first home she lived in. They was too ol'. Who's really seein' it is Ruthie an' Winfiel'" (244). The philosophical underpinnings of Tom's statement are immediately picked up by Pa, who can't help noticing their similarity with Casy's transcendental insight: "Here's Tommy talkin' like a growed-up man, talkin' like a preacher almos'" (244). The poet's inclination to see the beauty of nature, in turn, is highlighted by Casy's vision reached on the desert: "Night-time I'd lay on my back an' look up at the stars; morning I'd set an' watch the sun come up; midday I'd look out from a hill at the rollin' dry country; evening I'd foller the sun down….There was the hills, an' there was me, an' we wasn't separate no more" (88). His credentials as a poet are indicated by Tom at the beginning of the novel, who, when asked by the truck driver giving him a ride whether he has ever known "a guy that said big words," answers without hesitation—"Preacher" (15).

Being able to 'see' nature is not, however, limited to children and poets. Also farmers and scholars are likely to appreciate its beauty. A farmer, Emerson says, "is a person whom a poet of any clime…would appreciate as being really a piece of the old Nature,

comparable to sun and moon, rainbow and flood; because he is, as all natural persons are, representative of Nature as much as these" (758). Like children and animals, Emerson continues, he is uncorrupt and natural; he is "the man who lives in the presence of Nature" (758). Ma and Pa's earlier comment about the beauty of the California valley, then, makes them eligible candidates for this category. Also the scholar, represented again by Jim Casy, possesses such capability. His observation of nature during his seclusion in the desert is consistent with the following Emerson's description of an ideal scholar: "Every day, the sun; and, after sunset, Night and her stars. Even the wind blows; ever the grass grows. Every day, men and women, conversing—beholding and beholden. The scholar is he of all men whom this spectacle most engages" (Emerson 47).

Finally, the beauty of nature is exemplified by heroic acts. Great actions, Emerson maintains in *Nature*, not only "cause the place and the bystanders to shine" (11), but also demonstrate that the world belongs to every living individual by virtue of natural right: "Every rational creature has all nature for his dowry and estate. It is his, if he wills. He may divest himself of it; he may creep into a corner…, but he is entitled to the world by his constitution" (11). The first of these two views is demonstrated in *The Grapes of Wrath* by the infectious effect of heroic stories told at the Weedpatch camp on the listeners of those tales, who become "great through them" (345; ch. 23). The latter view, in turn, is shown by one such story. It is especially poignant because it depicts not only the beauty of such heroism, but also its subsequent destruction by human greed. The tale told by one of the migrants is about the bravery of an Indian warrior, who, before being shot dead by a regiment of white American soldiers, chooses to stand unarmed and naked on a hill, stretching his arms like a bird in the backdrop of the setting sun. For long moments, the white invaders watch the awesome scene, pulling their triggers only under the life-

threatening order of their own commander. The teller of this tale compares the Indian's death to the destruction of beauty in killing a pheasant:

> Ever see a cock pheasant, stiff and beautiful, ever' feather drawed an' painted, an' even his eyes drawed in pretty? An' bang! You pick him up – bloody an' twisted, an' you spoiled somepin better'n you; an' eatin' him don't never make it up to you, 'cause you spoiled somepin in yaself, an' you can't never fix it up. (346)

Noble or heroic actions, however, do not have to be performed among scenes of great natural beauty in order to merit reverence, according to Emerson. Also "[I]n private places, among sordid objects," he says in *Nature*, "an act of truth or heroism seems at once to draw to itself the sky as its temple, the sun as its candle" (12). In Steinbeck's novel, this kind of heroism is portrayed in a dilapidated barn by Rose of Sharon's breast-feeding of a starving man. Her sudden transformation from a whining girl into a selfless hero can be attributed in no small extent to the influence of nature upon her. She does what she does, apart from transferring her maternal love to a love of all people (discussed more broadly later in this thesis), as a form of contempt for nature's cruelty in depriving her of her baby, which is again consistent with Emerson's view expressed in *Nature*: "To a man laboring under calamity, the heat of his own fire hath sadness in it. Then there is a kind of contempt of the landscape felt by him who has just lost by death a dear friend" (7).

1.3. Nature as Discipline

Discipline is the third Emersonian use of nature to be analyzed in Steinbeck's novel. Nature, according to the Concord sage, acts as a powerful teacher, whereby "[S]pace, time, society, labor, climate, food, locomotion, the animals, the mechanical forces, give us sincerest lessons, day by day…" (20). Nature is relentless and unforgiving—"She pardons

no mistakes. Her yea is yea, her nay, nay" (Emerson 22). It also educates Reason, or the power of perception, by its "constant exercise in the necessary lessons of difference, of likeness, or order, of being and seeming, of progressive arrangement; of ascent from particular to general; of combination to one end of manifold forces" (20-21). This educative quality of nature also affects the Joads and other Okies, often taking a heavy toll on them because of their reliance on intuition. Casy, for example, criticizes Pa Joad for such dependence in his unexpected meeting with Tom during the strike-breaking at the Hooper ranch. When Tom rejects Casy's invitation to join the strike, claiming his father would not go for it due to his primary responsibility to the family, Casy replies: "I guess that's right. Have to take a beatin' 'fore he'll know" (406). As heavy a price for this reliance on intuition may be, however, there is no turning back from this path, since it contributes to man's increased resistance and power. One of the inmates in a California jail explains this view to Casy: "Anyways, you do what you can. And…the on'y thing you got to look at is that ever'time they's a little step fo'ward, she may slip back a little, but she never slips clear back" (407).

1.3.1. Property

The discipline of nature is also taught by property, as well as by its "filial systems of debt and credit" (21). Debt, Emerson believes, despite its cruelty, teaches people personal responsibility: "Debt, grinding debt, whose iron face the widow, the orphan, and the sons of genius fear and hate—debt which consumes so much time, which so cripples and disheartens a great spirit with cares that seem so base, is a preceptor whose lessons cannot be forgone, and is needed most by those who suffer from it most" (21). Such thinking, although with some restrictions, is also reflected in Steinbeck's novel. In Chapter 4, for example, one of the Oklahoma landowners blames the evicted sharecroppers for their own

plight. The debt they have incurred, he says, is largely their fault due to their overuse of the land by cotton farming: "You know what cotton does to the land: robs it, sucks all the blood out of it. The squatters nodded – they knew, God knew. If they could only rotate the crops they might pump blood back into the land" (37). The Okies would rather put their hopes of a miraculous profit in a sudden breakout of war, than in sustainable, steady growth.

A similar lesson is taught by property. Its distribution, Emerson says in *Nature,* can be compared to snow: 'if it fall level to-day," he says, "it will be blown into drifts to morrow'" (21). To him, then, uneven concentration of property is perfectly normal as it reflects individual differences among people. Little wonder that he rejects the notion of the inherent social equality, calling its believers fools who "suppose every man is as every other man" (21). Emerson's view on property, thus, differs significantly from that of the narrator of *The Grapes of Wrath*, who, despite acknowledging its uneven distribution, construes this phenomenon as an example of social injustice and even a threat to the social order. "[W]hen property accumulates in too few hands," he says, "it is taken away" (Steinbeck 253). Both Emerson and Steinbeck agree, however, that excessive dependence on property is a vice. The former says in *Self-Reliance*: "[People] measure their esteem of each other by what each has, and not by what each is" (168). Steinbeck's Casy expresses a similar opinion in Chapter 18, when referring to a rich industrialist: "If [a man] needs a million acres to make him feel rich, seems to me he needs it 'cause he feels awful poor inside hisself…an' maybe he's disappointed that nothin' he can do'll make him feel rich – not rich like Mis' Wilson was when she gave her tent when Grampa died" (219-220).

Over-reliance on property, in addition, damages man's relationship to nature, especially if it has come by "inheritance, or gift, or crime" (Emerson 168). In such a case,

Emerson alleges in *Self-Reliance*, man runs the risk of becoming disassociated from it: "he feels that it is not having; it does not belong to him, has no root in him and merely lies there because no revolution or no robber takes it away" (168). In *The Grapes of Wrath* such disassociation from land and property is caused by absentee ownership:

> But let a man get property he doesn't see, or can't take time to get his fingers in, or can't be there to walk on it—why, then the property is the man. He can't do what he wants, he can't think what he wants. The property is the man, stronger than he is. And he is small, not big. Only his possessions are big—and he's the servant of his property. (43)

There is no such risk involved, however, if that property is relatively small or is taken care of directly by its owner, according to the novel's narrator. On the contrary, there is a strong bond between man and his property, as corroborated by one of the evicted tenant farmers:

> If a man owns a little property, that property is him, it's part of him, and it's like him. If he owns property only so he can walk on it and handle it and be sad when it isn't doing well, and feel fine when the rain falls on it, that property is him, and some way he's bigger because he owns it. Even if he isn't successful he's big with his property. (42-43)

Steinbeck, finally, would also likely agree with Emerson on the issue of property acquisition. Both writers admit that such acquisition does not have to be necessarily achieved by pecuniary means—it can also be accomplished by virtue of natural right, or the brute force of the stronger (Emerson 11). Such a stance is reflected by Okies' 'natural' claim to their land. It is they, the evicted tenant farmers argue, who wrestled the land from both Nature and the Indians: "Grampa took up the land, and he had to kill the Indians and drive them away. And Pa was born here, and he killed the weeds and snakes….An' we was

born here. There in the door—our children born here" (Steinbeck 38). What makes real ownership, then, is not the deed of property, but the fact of "being born on [the land], working it, dying on it" (38). "This land, this red land, is us;" another farmer asserts later in Chapter 9, "and the flood years and the dust years and the drought years are us" (95).

1.3.2. Survival of the Fittest

Discipline in nature is also reflected by the Darwinist principle of the survival of the fittest. "Power is, in nature," Emerson says in *Self-Reliance*, the essential measure or right. Nature suffers nothing to remain in her kingdoms which cannot help itself" (159). Such deterministic thinking is also amply demonstrated in *The Grapes of Wrath*, mainly through the actions of the Joad family. Their survival is especially difficult, Levant notices, because it is fought on two fronts—with natural forces in Oklahoma and during their westward trek, and with people in California (115). Not surprisingly, not all the Joads manage to survive in this struggle. The family's weakest members, be it physically or mentally, die or desert. They simply fail to adjust to new conditions quickly enough – their dog gets run over by a car on the highway, the grand-parents die of homesickness and exhaustion, Connie deserts his wife when she needs him most, even Pa and Uncle John show the signs of resignation as the family's westward trek progresses.

The remaining Joads, however, plod on like the awkward turtle, in accordance with this merciless rule of nature. Like the turtle, for instance, which kills a red ant when threatened, they know how to protect themselves—by sticking together. Ma expresses this Darwinist principle to the dejected Pa and Uncle John in Chapter 28: "Ever'thin' we do – seems to me is aimed right at goin' on. Seems that way to me. Even getting' hungry – even bein' sick; some die but the rest is tougher" (448). Also eldest son, Tom, fits this category perfectly well, whose physical prowess lets him survive two near-death experiences. In

order to survive, however, he has to take two lives with him. Death and killing, therefore, are often the necessary ingredients of survival, as supported additionally by Muley's killing and skinning of wild rabbits or slaughtering the pigs by the Joads. Survival of the fittest even involves commonplace skills and abilities, like fixing or selecting trucks. Last but not least, it is demonstrated in the novel on the basic level of Okies' industriousness. The multi-use of cotton bags or sharing gasoline costs while looking for work are only some examples of such survival.

Survival of the fittest, however, does not have to mean being the strongest physically—it can entail other traits and characteristics, like deceit and cunning. Such cunning is represented by many a migrant in the form of the "bull-simple" tactic, that is, acting as if one were dumb and confounded – a response to the alleged abuses of the state police. Tom first learns about this approach from one of the migrants at a Hoovervile camp: "Well, when the cops come in, an' they come in all the time, that's how you want to be. Dumb – don't know nothin'. Don't understan' nothin'. That's how the cops like us. Don't hit no cops. That's jus' suicide. Be bull-simple" (263; ch. 20). The bull-simple tactic has its limitations, however, since a person often has to sacrifice his/her decency for it, and that means, as Emerson warns in *Self-Reliance*, putting one's own independence at stake: "Let us never bow and apologize more….Let a man then know his worth, and keep things under his feet. Let him not peep or steal, or skulk up and down with the air of a charity-boy, a bastard, or an interloper in the world that exists for him" (153-154). Tom is fully aware of such a consequence, even before the town vigilantes order him to drive the truck in the opposite direction. "But it *ain't* the law." he cries in rage against the actions of the state police, "They're a-workin' away our spirits. They're tryin' to break us" (296; ch. 20).

1.3.3. Unity in Nature

Discipline in nature, finally, shows nature's amazing unity**.** Despite its variety, says Emerson, Nature exhibits an incredible similarity of its components:

> Nature works on a method of *all for each and each for all*. The strain that is made on one point bears on every arch and foundation of the structure. There is a perfect solidarity. You cannot detach an atom from its holdings, or strip off from it the electricity, gravitation, chemic affinity or the relation to light and heat and leave the atom bare. No, it brings with it its universal ties. (752)

The same idea is also expressed in *The American Scholar*:

> By and by, it [nature] finds how to join two things and see in them one nature; then three, then three thousand; and so, tyrannized over by its own unifying instinct, it goes on tying things together, diminishing anomalies, discovering roots running under ground whereby contrary and remote things cohere and flower out from one stem. (47)

A similar unity is also present in *The Grapes of Wrath*, and is highlighted for instance by the qualities of the land: "For nitrates are not the land, nor phosphates; and the lengths of fibre in the cotton is not the land…. [T]he land is so much more than its analysis" (124). Unity in nature, Paul observes, is primarily achieved through seeing, which to Emerson is "constitutional" (Konvitz 159). It amounts not only to man's "spiritual health" (159), but is also the source of his inspiration. Especially important in this vision is the "awakening stimulus of light," (159) without which Emerson is "spiritually blind" (159). To him, seeing means reaching the higher esthetic level of organic unity, in which one can detect not only the whole but also its respective parts (160). These two perceptions of nature can be called "nature ensphered and nature atomized", corresponding in turn to the far and close powers

of the eye (Konvitz 160). "The sympathy with nature he hoped to attain by seeing," Paul continues, "he found in cultivating the distant powers of vision of the eye; for in distant vision he discovered a state of perception in which he felt a heightened intimacy with the natural process itself" (160). Distant vision, therefore, allows man to achieve "synthesis and relatedness" (161), whereby all things are similar and "equalized" (161). Such distant vision is exemplified in *The Grapes of Wrath* by the dislimning qualities of light. Especially the light coming from the horizon is capable of integrating various natural objects into one, as exemplified in this vision by the Joad family:

> They saw the shed take shape against the light, and they saw the lanterns pale until they no longer cast their circles of yellow light. The stars went out, few by few, toward the west. And still the family stood about like dream-walkers, their eyes focused panoramically, seeing no detail, but the whole dawn, the whole land, the whole texture of the country at once. (121-122)

The same light, however, can also do the opposite in Steinbeck's novel – it can delineate objects, dispersing the lumped natural forms into individual ones:

> The film of evening light made the red earth lucent, so that its dimensions were deepened, so that a stone, a post, a building had greater depth and more solidity than in the daytime light; and these objects were curiously more individual – a post was more essentially a post, set off from the earth it stood in and the field of corn it stood out against. And plants were individuals, not the mass of crop; and the ragged willow tree was itself standing free of all other willow trees. (107)

The delineated by light objects, however, do not violate Emerson's belief in the unity in nature, but only reflect its variety—"…things are not huddled and lumped," he says in

Nature, "but sundered and individual" (21). "A leaf, a drop, a crystal, a moment of time," Emerson says a few pages later, "is related to the whole, and partakes of the perfection of the whole" (24). There is a similarity even among seemingly disparate objects. A flow of the river, for example, resembles the overhead flow of the air, and the air "resembles the light which traverses it with more subtle currents; [and] the light resembles the heat which rides with it through Space" (Emerson 24). Such unity of seemingly contrastive natural forms is also visible in Steinbeck's novel. Ma implies it when consoling her pain-stricken, pregnant daughter in Chapter 18: "They's a time of change, an' when that comes, dyin' is a piece of all dyin', and bearin' is a piece of all bearin', an' bearin' an' dyin' is two pieces of the same thing" (222).

Ma's utterance, in addition, reflects another aspect of the variety in Nature—namely, that of its constant change and renewal. To Ma, like to Emerson, life is a flux: "Nature is as subtle as she is strong. She turns her capital day by day; deals never with dead, but ever with quick subjects. All things are flowing, even those that seem immovable. The adamant is always passing into smoke" (Emerson 753). Such renewal and flow can be seen in the emergence of natural rights in the "Hooverville" camps, including:

> …the right of privacy in the tent; the right to keep the past black hidden in the heart; the right to talk and to listen; the right to refuse help or to accept; to offer or to decline it; the right of son to court and daughter to be courted; the right of the hungry to be fed; the right of the pregnant and the sick to transcend all other rights. (207)

A better example yet of nature's constant renewal is symbolized in the novel by the barley seeds, sown inadvertently from under the shell of the land turtle (20-21). Their adaptability is particularly worth noticing:

> …the grass heads were heavy with oat beards to catch on a dog's coat, and foxtails to tangle in a horse's fetlocks, and clover burrs to fasten in sheep's wool; sleeping life waiting to be spread and dispersed, every seed armed with an appliance of dispersal, twisting darts and parachutes for the wind, little spears and balls of tiny thorns, and all waiting for animals and for the wind, for a man's trouser cuff or the hem of a woman's skirt, all passive but armed with appliances of activity, still but each possessed of the angle of movement. (19)

Renewal of life is also conspicuous in the last chapter of Steinbeck's novel, whereby Ruthie finds a "scraggy geranium gone wild" (477). Despite the flooding, the flower manages not only to survive but also to retain one of its blooming petals. Nature's constant rebirth, however, does not have to be only conveyed by living or hibernated objects – it can also be signified by inanimate objects or even corpses (Emerson 16). In Steinbeck's novel, the corpses of Grampa, Granma, as well as Rose of Sharon's still-born baby perform such a role. They are the seeds of new life for the Joad generations to come in California. Nature's renewal, finally, is implied by the river in California. It signifies not only the new beginning to Noah, who decides to separate from the family and follow the river's course on his own, but also allows Uncle John to cleanse himself from the alleged sins by his complete inebriation.

2. The Uses of Intuition

Although Nature teaches man several of its hard and fast rules, it is intuition, and not experience, that mostly determines man's relationship with Nature (Emerson 3). The source of this intuition, as indicated before, comes from the power of seeing—"What we are, that only can we see" (42), closes Emerson his final arguments in *Nature*. Intuition helps

maintain the proper relationship between the seer and the seen: "Turn the eyes upside down, by looking at the landscape through your legs, and how agreeable is the picture, though you have seen it any time these twenty years" (28)! Perception, he adds in *Self-Reliance* is "the essence of genius, of virtue, and of life…" (155); it is the cause of all things, including thought, action, human inspiration, and wisdom, and faith (155).

The characters in *The Grapes of Wrath* are no different in this regard – they almost blindly follow the Emersonian path of intuition, deriving considerably their instinctive behavior from the observation of Nature. Pa Joad demonstrates it, for example, by sensing the early arrival of winter in California, despite having never been there before. When Tom facetiously asks him whether his hunch is based on "Squirrels a-buildin' high, or grass seeds" (426), Pa answers: "I dunno….Seems like it's gittin' on winter to me. Fella'd have to live here a long time to know" (426; ch. 26). This intuitive faculty to see nature is especially important to Jim Casy, who, as an Emersonian scholar, "plies the slow, unhonored, and unpaid task of observation" (Emerson 55). Casy's ability to see, especially on the level of spiritual insight, is unquestionable, and is demonstrated by his vision during the seclusion on the desert.

Casy's vision, in addition, indicates the second major source of intuition – abandonment, or, as Emerson says in Self-Reliance, "shun[ning] the father and mother and wife and brother" (149) when called by one's genius. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, intuitive behavior acquired during abandonment is also corroborated by Tom's compulsory isolation from society during his four-year-long jail sentence for committing homicide. It is in jail, Tom reveals to Casy, where he develops his sixth sense: "When you're in jail – you get to kinda – sensin' stuff….If somepin's gonna bust – if say a fell's goin' stir-bugs an' take a crack at a guard with a mop handle – why you know it 'fore it happens. An' if they's gonna

be a break or a riot, nobody don't have to tell ya. You're sensy about it. You know" (266). The reason why he shares his insight with Casy is to convince him to not leave the family yet, for he has a premonition that something important is going to happen the following day at the "Hooverville" camp:

> Stick aroun' till to-morra anyways. Somepin's gonna come up. I was talkin' to a kid up the road. An' he's bein' jis' as sneaky an' wise as a dog coyote, but he's too wise. Dog coyote a-mindin' his own business an' innocent an' sweet, jus' havin' fun an' no harm – well, they's a hen roost clost by….When a bunch a folks, nice quiet folks, don't know nothin' about nothin' – somepin's goin' on. (266-267)

Intuitive behavior caused by abandonment, finally affects Uncle John—especially after the negligent death of his young wife he is perceived as the "[L]onest goddamn man in the world" (74), who "[N]ever wanted to get close to folks" (75). His instinctive behavior manifests itself in his eating, drinking and sexual habits. When he wants pork, for instance, he eats the whole pig while discarding the rest as he "don't want no pig hangin' around" (35). Likewise, when he needs to relieve his sexual desire, he hires several prostitutes simultaneously. Finally, when he feels like expiating himself for his alleged sins, he drinks instinctively into a stupor.

2.1. Optimism

Perception is also the source of optimism. Emerson calls it in *An Address* the embodiment of beauty, revealing itself to man when his mind and heart "open to the sentiment of virtue" (68). Such infinite beauty, he says, can only be attained by striving "to the good, to the perfect…, low as he now lies in evil and weakness" (68). Emersonian optimism, then, can spring even from evil, which to the Concord sage is not real or

absolute, but rather "privative" and devoid of heat (69). This view, in turn, reflects nature's 'law of compensation,' according to which, a loss or subtraction at one side automatically leads to an increase at the other: "That great principle of Undulation in nature, that shows itself in the inspiring expiring of the breath; in the desire and satiety; in the web and flow of the sea; in day and night, in heat and cold…, is known to us under the name of Polarity…" (Emerson 54). Emerson's belief in automatic improvement, Arvin says, "like gravitation and natural selection" (Konvitz 47), is a natural order of things, taking place without much involvement of "the painful human will" (47). Good always emerges from evil: "Good ends are always served whether by good men or bad; that rogues and savages are as effectual in the process as prophets and saints" (47).

Similar attitude can also be found in Steinbeck's novel. Ma Joad reveals it in Chapter 28, for example, when the family's unity is under threat: "We ain't gonna die out. People is goin' on – changin' a little, maybe, but goin' right on" (448). When Uncle John dejectedly challenges her to explain her view, Ma replies: "Hard to say….Ever'thin' we do – seems to me is aimed right at goin' on….Even getting' hungry – even bein' sick; some die but the rest is tougher" (448). Ma repeats her Emersonian view of goodness born from sorrow in Chapter 13, consoling her pain-stricken, pregnant daughter that "[A] chile born outa sorrow'll be a happy chile" (151). There are also signs of such optimism even amongst the youngest Joads. Winfield shows it during the flooding at the cotton farm, by admitting to Ruthie he "knowed it all the time" (474) that their elder sister was going to be all right after her abortive labor. When Ruthie asks him to reveal the source of this knowledge, Winfield answers enigmatically—"I won't tell" (474). Moments later, as if to match Wifield's blooming optimism, Ruthie finds an isolated, ragged geranium with "one rain-beaten blossom on it" (477). These last two events prepare the reader for the culmination of such

instinctive optimism—Rosasharn's breast-feeding gesture at the novel's closure. She suckles a starving man despite the loss of her baby, and in the face of her own grave health condition.

The optimism represented by the blossoming flower, moreover, lends credence to the already mentioned aspect of intuition, that is, its frequent source in the observation of nature. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, one of the best examples of such optimism is derived from the ability to see the horizon. Apart from its already discussed soothing and beautifying properties, as well its dislimning and delineating features, the sight of the horizon signifies hope, or, as Paul puts it in *The Angle of Vision*, "the progressive ascent by which one advanced on the chaos and the dark" (Konvitz 175). The characters in Steinbeck's novel react to it in a similar fashion – as long as they can see it, there is hope and optimism in them. At the beginning of the novel, for instance, the setting sun is the augury of Tom's imminent and long-awaited reunification with his family: "The red sun touched the horizon and spread out like a jellyfish, and the sky above it seemed much brighter and more alive than it had been" (50). This optimism is additionally highlighted by Tom's cleaning of his dusty feet, before unwrapping and putting on his new shoes right after taking a glimpse of the horizon. In another instance, as Tom and Casy approach Uncle John's house (after learning miraculously from Mulley Graves about the family's whereabouts and their impending westward departure), the horizon at dawn serves as a torch for them, directing them towards Uncle John's house: "Only the unbalanced sky showed the approach of dawn, no horizon to the west, a line to the east" (73). The sight of the horizon, also, signals spotting that house by Tom and Casy: "A redness grew up out of the eastern horizon, and on the ground birds began to chirp sharply. 'Look!' said Joad. 'Right ahead. That's Uncle John's tank. Can't see the win'mill, but there's his tank. See it against the sky?'" (76). As

they come closer, the horizon light signifies not only the family's reunification, but also its impending western migration, by focusing the light on the old Huston truck bought specifically for that purpose: "As they drew near, the men could hear pounding from the yard, and as the rim of the blinding sun came up over the horizon, it fell on the truck, and they saw a man and the flash of his hammer as it rose and fell" (77; ch. 8). The Joads' hopeful westering is also signaled by the horizon thirty pages later, whereby the western side of the house is described as "luminous as the moon" (107). Last but not least, the sight of the horizon at dawn uncovers for the first time to the Joads the beauty of a valley in California, while simultaneously leaving behind the murderous mountains. The horizon light at dawn, finally, turns out to be a good omen for Tom, who luckily gets invited to work by one of the Weedpatch campers only moments after taking a look at the mountainous horizon.

Conversely, the inability to see the horizon, as portrayed by the dimming dust in Chapter 4, brings no such optimism:

> The plants strove against the sun. And distance, toward the horizon, was tan to invisibility. The dust road stretched out ahead of them, waving up and down. The willows of a stream lined across the west, and to the north-west a fallow section was going back to sparse brush. But the smell of burned dust was in the air and the air was dry, so that mucus in the nose dried to a crust, and the eyes watered to keep the eyeballs from drying out. (Steinbeck 32-33)

What is more, its sudden disappearance can be even ominous, creating chaos and darkness: A large drop of sun lingered on the horizon and then dripped over and was gone, and the sky was brilliant over the spot where it had gone, and a torn cloud, like a bloody rag, hung over the spot of its going" (53).

2.2. The Over-Soul

Intuition is also imperative to the cornerstone of Emerson's transcendental philosophy – the doctrine of the Over-Soul. According to this doctrine, man becomes united with all of nature and all people via the universal soul. Emerson speaks about such influence in *An Address*: "The intuition of the moral sentiment is an insight of the perfection of the laws of the soul" (68). Intuition, he reiterates in *Self-Reliance*, creates a certain oneness of space, light, time and man (155), turning the last one into the representative of all humanity: "there is One Man—present to all particular men only partially, or through one faculty; and that you must take the whole society to find the whole man. Man is not a farmer, or a professor, or an engineer, but he is all. Man is priest, and scholar, and statesman, and producer, and soldier" (Emerson 46). It is man's soul, Emerson adds in *The American Scholar*, which allows him to understand "the particular natures of all men" (59). The doctrine of the Over-Soul is also one of the leading themes of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. It is expressed mainly through Jim Casy, who goes into the wilderness in search of his own soul. What he finds there, instead, is part of the bigger soul that belongs to all people: "Maybe all men got one big soul ever'body's a part of" (Steinbeck 29). This universal unity borders on collectivity, as reiterated by Casy's disciple, Tom, in his farewell conversation with mother: "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lif' up his fellow, but woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he has not another to help him up" (443).Emerson's view on the subject is no different. "The individual, to possess himself," he says in *The American Scholar*, "must somehow return from his own labor to embrace all the other laborers" (46). Aaron even goes so far as to suggest in *Emerson and the Progressive Tradition* that Emerson's doctrine of the Over-Soul is the source of his political ideas, whereby all people share, or at

least are capable of sharing, this divine power. They contribute at the same time to some form of egalitarian brotherhood of men where each man is capable of greatness: "Men's joint participation in this Spirit, their common share of the divine inheritance, made them brothers and gave the lie to artificial distinctions. In the great democracy of spirit that Emerson conjured up as a kind of Platonic archetype of the imperfect American model, all men were potentially great" (Konvitz 95).

The intuitive doctrine of the Over-Soul, in addition, is highly selective. It is more of a "provocation" than a teacher (71). It is reserved for few, Emerson says in *An Address*, and "denied with fury" to the rest (71). This "divine nature," moreover, cannot be modified or borrowed from anyone—it can be only directly acquired through another soul: "What [another soul] announces, I must find true in me, or reject; and on his word, or as his second…I can accept nothing" (71). In the same vein, this transcendental brotherhood of all men is initially only available to Casy in Steinbeck's novel. Tom does not understand it at first—not even after listening to Casy's jail parable at the Hooper ranch. He does not comprehend it because the doctrine of the Over-Soul can only be acquired intuitively. Little wonder that Casy does not even bother to explain him the significance of the story: "Maybe I can't tell you," he says, "Maybe you got to find out" (405; ch.26). It is only during Tom's temporary hiding in the bushes near the cotton camp where he is allowed to assume instinctively Casy's vision: "Says one time he went out in the wilderness to find his own soul, an' he foun' he didn' have no soul that was his'n. Says he foun' he jus' got a little piece of a great big soul" (442). The influence of intuition on Tom's sudden transformation is implied by Tom himself: "See? God, I'm talkin' like Casy….Seems like I can see him sometimes" (444).

The Over-Soul, moreover, is closely related to the notion of Spirit – a term encompassing virtues of love, justice, and temperance (Emerson 69-70). Spirit puts Nature through man, not around him, says Emerson in *Nature* (35); it "communicate[s], not one thing, but all things;…scatter[s] forth light, nature, time, souls, from the centre of the present thought; and new date and new create[s] the whole" (156). The Universal Spirit, Emerson claims, is the source of unity in Nature, and manifests itself, among others, by its "circular power" (47). Such power can be derived, for example, from "the bending horizon, [as well as from man's] own experience of the eye as the first circle and the horizon as the second (Konvitz 175). Like the horizon, Paul alleges, Spirit signifies "the Unattainable"; it is "the unifying Idea", whereby man's angle of vision allows him to become the center of that circle, thus becoming divine himself (176). Emerson encapsulates this view of man as the center respectively in *Self-Reliance* and *Nature*: "…a true man belongs to no other time or place, but is the center of things. Where he is, there is nature. He measures you and all men and all events" (153); and, "He is placed in the centre of beings, and a ray of relation passes from every other being to him" (15-16).

The signs of such influence of the center can also be traced in Steinbeck's novel. One of them is conveyed by the unifying power of the horizon light, which makes the Joads' truck the center of the family, by giving its members an untold signal to gather around it. The truck, then, serves as a prelude to the Emersonian unity of all men:

> The earth contributed a light to the evening. The front of the grey, paintless house, facing the west, was luminous as the moon is. The grey dusty truck, in the yard before the door, stood out magically in this light, in the overdrawn perspective of a stereopticon….The house was dead, and the

> fields were dead; but this truck was the active thing, the living principle…– this was the new hearth, the living centre of the family. (107)

Especially Tom and his elder brother, Noah, seem to be enchanted by the power of the circle. The former, for example, is seen in Chapter 4 drawing circles in the sand during Casy's speech about Spirit (25). The latter, in turn, gets under a similar transcendental spell in the vicinity of a river in California, on the banks of which he decides to separate himself from the rest of the family. The river must signify to Noah the flow of Spirit that passes both through his soul and the surrounding nature, merging the two into the fluid whole. Now, let us compare the significance of Steinbeck's river with Emerson's view on the subject expressed in *Nature*:

> Throw a stone into the stream, and the circles that propagate themselves are the beautiful type of all influence. Man is conscious of a universal soul within or behind his individual life, wherein…the natures of Justice, Truth, Love, Freedom, arise and shine. This universal soul he calls Reason: it is not mine, or thine, or his, but we are its; we are its property and men. (15)

As Frost notices additionally in *On Emerson*, the center of a circle stands for goodness, and is contrasted with the dualistic form of good and evil represented by an oval: "…ideally in thought only is a circle round. In practice, in nature, the circle becomes an oval. As a circle it has one center—Good. As an oval it has two centers—Good and Evil" (Konvitz 17). Spirit, therefore, epitomizes ultimate goodness, or love. As Emerson puts it in *An Address*, Spirit "invites every man to expand to the full circle of the universe, and will have no preferences but those of spontaneous love" (73). The spontaneity of such goodness is also stressed in *Self-Reliance*: "When good is near you, when you have life in yourself, it is not by any known or accustomed way; you shall not discern the footprints of any other;

you shall not see the face of man; you shall not hear any name; the way, the thought, the good, shall be wholly strange and new. It shall exclude example and experience" (158). It is this love, finally, that helps man achieve the transcendental unity with the souls of all people: "The world lacks unity because man is disunited with himself….Love is…its demand" (Emerson 41).

Instinctive love is also present in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Especially Casy seems to be inspired by it. Spirit to him is not the love of God, but the love of all humanity: "What's this call, this sperit?....It's love. I love people so much I'm fit to bust, sometimes….I don't know nobody name' Jesus. I know a bunch of stories, but I only love people….Maybe…it's all men an' all women we love; maybe that's the Holy Sperit – the human sperit – the whole shebang" (28-29). Like Emerson, therefore, Casy loves only what he can see. This Emersonian premise, Wagenknecht notices, happens to be consistent with the Bible itself—"how [can] a man who does not love his brother, whom he has seen," Wagenknecht asks, "…possibly love God, whom he has not seen" (44). The love of humanity must be also behind Rosasharn's unexpected decision to suckle a starving man at the very end of the novel. As Carpenter points out, Rose of Sharon "symbolically transmutes her maternal love to a love of all people" (1972:715). Her love, then, as well as Casy's and to a lesser extent Tom's, supersedes the love of family; "they love people so much" Carpenter observes, "that they are ready to die for them" (715). The antithesis of Emerson's doctrine of love is symbolized in Steinbeck's novel by the religiously fanatic Mrs. Sandry. Her notion of Spirit implies not the love and unity with, all people, but rather the love and unity with the Devil. This can be seen when Ma Joad uncompromisingly rejects the woman's notion of sin, only short of telling her to go to hell. And Mrs. Sandry does symbolically go to hell – she gets a violent fit resembling a metamorphosis into a werewolf: "Her eyes rolled up, her shoulders

and arms flopped loosely at her side, and a string of thick ropy saliva ran from the corner of her mouth. She howled again and again, long deep animal howls" (340; ch. 22). While she is still twitching on the ground, one of the men witnessing the scene comments ironically: "The sperit. She got the sperit" (340).

Last but not least, the doctrine of the Over-Soul is closely related to nature. It is not only nature's origin—"The genesis and maturation of a planet…, the bended tree recovering itself from the strong wind, the vital resources of every animal and vegetable, are demonstrations of the self-sufficing…soul" (Emerson 159)—, but also constitutes unity with it, or "answer[s] to it part for part" (48). Such unity of man and nature is portrayed in *The Grapes of Wrath* by his relationship with his land: "Carbon is not a man, nor salt nor water nor calcium. He is all these, but he is much more….The man…is more than his chemistry, walking on the earth, turning his plough-point for a stone, dropping his handles to slide over an outcropping, kneeling in the earth to eat his lunch…" (124). Removing man from his land, on the other hand, causes his psychological if not physical death. Casy asserts this in a conversation with Noah during Grampa's burial: "Grampa an' the old place, they was jus' the same thing….An' Grampa didn't die tonight. He died the minute you took 'im off the place" (156). Instrumental in achieving this unity, Emerson adds in *Nature*, is man's simultaneous study of nature and himself, for "[S]o much of nature as he is ignorant of, so much of his own mind does he not yet possess" (48). Steinbeck's Casy is no different in this regard: "Night-time I'd lay on my back an' look up at the stars; morning I'd set an' watch the sun come up; midday I'd look out from a hill at the rollin' dry country; evening I'd foller the sun down….There was the hills, an' there was me, an' we wasn't separate no more. We was one thing. An' that one thing was holy" (88). His unity with nature, therefore, verges on his divinity – by allowing nature to absorb him, he becomes

God himself: “An’ I got thinkin’, on’y it wasn’t thinkin’, it was deeper down than thinkin’. I got thinkin’ how we was holy when we was one thing, an’ mankin’ was holy when it one thing” (89). Such thinking is, again, congruent with Emerson’s, who says in *Nature*: “Give me health and a day, and I will make the pomp of emperors ridiculous. The dawn is my Assyria; the sunset and moonrise my Paphos…, broad noon shall be my England of the senses and the understanding; the night shall be my Germany of mystic philosophy and dreams” (10); and his most famous part, “Standing on the bare ground—my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God” (6).

Casy’s divine vision, finally, demonstrates that man’s universal unity with nature and all people is the source of great power. Man rules nature, Emerson says in *Nature*, not owing to his cunning, but because of his ability to identify himself with “every great and small thing” (37). The power acquired this way, he goes on to say in the same essay, can be utilized not only to affect particular events but also a series of events, i.e. history (22). Such power is visible in the novel in the already mentioned story about a Native American warrior:

> They was a brave on a ridge, against the sun. Knowed he stood out. Spread his arms an’ stood. Naked as morning, an’ against the sun….Stood there, arms spread out; like a cross he looked. Four hundred yards. An’ the men – well, they raised their sights an’ they felt the wind with their fingers; an’ then they jus’ lay there an’ couldn’ shoot. Maybe that Injun knowed somepin. Knowed we couldn’ shoot….An’ we went up. An’ he wasn’ big – he’d looked so grand – up there. (345-346)

The power from universal unity can be also inferred from Casy's jail parable—"Here's me," he says of his jail experience, "been a-goin' into the wilderness like Jesus to try to find out somepin. Almost got her sometimes, too. But it's in the jail-house I really got her" (404). And what he 'gets' there is the force of the unified action – the prisoners achieve their goal (get better food) only after their rowdy protest. Neither are Ma and Tom oblivious to such power. The former implies it in Chapter 8, in which she warns Tom against making any rash decisions single-handedly: "Tommy, I got to thinkin' an' dreamin' an' wonderin'. They say there's a hun'erd thousand of us shoved out. If we was all mad the same way, Tommy – they wouldn't hunt nobody down…" (84). The latter, in turn, reciprocates with a similar view during their farewell meeting, suggesting the following solution to the Okies' poverty and social injustice—"Throw out the cops that ain't our people. All work together for our own thing – all farm our own lan'….I been wonderin' if all our folks got together an' yelled, like them fellas yelled…at the Hooper ranch" (443).

The last three examples, in addition, indicate another source of this universal power—anger. The ability to show one's rage is consistent with Emerson, who says in *Self-Reliance* that "a man must know how to estimate a sour face," (151) even at the cost of being alienated from others. And Steinbeck's 'Okies' are no different in this regard. In Chapter 1, for instance, their anger helps maintain the unity of the families:

> The women studied the men's faces secretly, for the corn could go, as long as something else remained. The children stood near by…to see whether men and women would break….After a while the faces of the watching men lost their bemused perplexity and became hard and angry and resistant. Then the women knew that they were safe and there was no break…that no misfortune was too great to bear if their men were whole. (9-10)

Such unified anger also wraps up Steinbeck's novel, sealing it structurally:

> The women watched the men, watched to see whether the break had come at last….And where a number of men gathered together, the fear went from their faces, and anger took its place. And the women sighed with relief, for they knew it was all right – the break had not come; and the break would never come as long as fear could turn to wrath. (459-460; ch. 29)

Finally, the Okies' unity is facilitated by the anger of the California's haves, afraid of losing their possessions to the swarms of hungry have-nots from Oklahoma— "[T]he hostility changed them," says the novel's narrator about the migrants in Chapter 21, "[it] welded them, united them" (299). And Emerson undoubtedly recognizes the innate power of people's anger, although he gives more voice of it to the individual, rather than the group. He is also more skeptical as to the underlying reasons of collective anger, and instead tends to put the blame of their poverty on their ignorance: "But when …the indignation of the people is added, when the ignorant and the poor are aroused, when the unintelligent brute force that lies at the bottom of society is made to growl and mow, it needs the habit of magnanimity and religion to treat it godlike as a trifle of no concernment" (151).

CHAPTER III

Man's Relationship to Himself

1. Independence

Man's relation to himself, as envisaged by Emerson, can be summarized in one word – self-reliance. "Nothing is at last sacred," Emerson says in *Self-Reliance*, "but the integrity of your own mind" (148). Such freedom, he continues, is one of the most important characteristics of a true man—it is the sign of his genius (145) as well as of his own divinity: "And truly it demands something godlike in him who has cast off the common motives of humanity and has ventured to trust himself for a taskmaster" (161). This independence, moreover, as highlighted in *The American Scholar*, reflects nature itself—"The world is nothing, the man is all; in yourself is the law of all nature" (62). Intellectual freedom and non-conformity are also the unequivocal traits of Steinbeck's 'Okies'. The most vivid example of such freedom is Jim Casy, who stands up to the official church dogmas, following instinctively his own philosophy of love for humanity. He indicates his independence by comparing himself to a land turtle: "Nobody can't keep a turtle though. They work at it and work at it, and at last one day they get out and away they go – off somewheres. It's like me. I wouldn't take the good ol' gospel that was just layin' there to my hand. I got to be pickin' at it an' workin' at it until I got it all tore down" (26). And later on in Chapter 5, when the turtle tries to escape from captivity, Casy again underscores its independent nature: "I seen turtles all my life. They're always goin' some place. They always seem to want to get there" (50).

Intellectual independence, moreover, requires standing by one's principles. "Nothing can bring you peace" Emerson says, "but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the

triumph of principles" (169). To Casy, those principles signify humaneness and the dignity of human life; to Tom, man's decency; to Ma and Pa, the responsibility for the family; to all of them—including the remaining Joads—honesty, truthfulness, hard work, and determination. Voicing openly one's principles, however, has its downsides, according to Emerson. Namely, such declarations alienate their authors to others: "[A]s soon as he has once acted or spoken with *éclat* he is a committed person, watched by the sympathy or the hatred of hundreds, whose affections must now enter into his account" (147). Emerson cautions, therefore, against committing oneself too early to a given idea, lest he or she should be easily defeated. Taking a public stance deserves credit only when expressing a view on significant and urgent matters, in which case it is the source of formidable power, "sink[ing] like darts into the ear of men and put[ting] them into fear" (148). In Steinbeck's novel, it is again Tom and Casy who are not afraid to openly declare their principles. Not surprisingly, they find it difficult to escape the pitfalls associated with their open stance—Casy gets killed for his involvement in his struggle for social justice. He is defeated. It is the matter of speculation whether Tom gets defeated, too, bearing in mind his uncompromising declaration made before leaving the family permanently. Despite all this, they both possess real power because the issues they raise are of paramount importance. By finding or hoping to find a receptive ear among many an abused migrant, Casy and Tom manage to create fear in the alleged culprits of their suffering—the big farm owners and the state police.

An independent man, lastly, does not imitate. "There is a time in every man's education" Emerson says in *Self-Reliance*, "when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better for worse as his portion" (146). People, he says, should not dismiss outright their original thoughts because

those thoughts are usually the ones that are true. In a sense, therefore, we are our own philosophers since we tend to recognize our once-rejected thoughts in the words of "bards and sages" (145). By analogy, Casy never imitates (except probably unawares Emerson himself) – he renounces his preaching profession in search of his own genius. Similarly, Tom recognizes in Casy's genius his own initially rejected thoughts: "Guess who I been thinkin' about?" he asks his mother before their final separation, "Casy! He talked a lot. Used ta bother me. But now I been thinkin' what he said, an' I can remember – all of it" (442; ch. 28). Although Tom might be accused by Emerson of imitation, he nevertheless fully understands Casy's ideas, and is poised to use them for a just cause, i.e. to protect individuals, which Emerson approves of:

> We are like children who repeat by rote the sentences of grandames and tutors, and, as they grow older, of the men of talents and character they chance to see—painfully recollecting the exact words they spoke; afterwards, when they come into the point of view which those had who uttered these sayings, they understand them and are willing to let the words go; for at any time they can use words as good when occasion comes. (157)

Intellectual freedom can only be fully realized when put into use – it must be accompanied by action. "The power which resides in him is new in nature," Emerson says in *Self-Reliance*, "and none but he knows what that is which he can do, nor does he know until he has tried" (146). Action, Emerson challenges in *The American Scholar*, contrary to words, which "break, chop, and impoverish" (25) truth, inspires man's intellect "ripen[ing] [it] into truth" (52). Action, finally, reflects the already discussed unity in nature: "The wise man, in doing one thing," Emerson goes on to say in *Nature*, "does all; or, in the one thing he does rightly, he sees the likeness of all which is done rightly" (25).

Freedom of action also happens to be one of the main themes of *The Grapes of Wrath*. It is mainly portrayed by the Joads' 'do-what-you-have-to-do' attitude, and ranges from the innocuous and care-free doctrine of carpe diem to the severance with tradition. Casy explains such freedom to Uncle John, who suddenly wants to leave the rest of the family because of his alleged bad luck on them: "I can't tell you. I don't think they's luck or bad luck. On'y one thing in this worl' I'm sure of, an' that's I'm sure nobody got a right to mess with a fella's life. He got to do it all hisself. Help him, maybe, but not tell him what to do" (238-239). Throughout the novel, Casy's do-what-you-got-to-do mantra quickly becomes commonly accepted and implemented by the Joads. It is reverberated for example by Ma who, in the last chapter of the novel, calms down her increasingly sheepish and dejected husband, who desperately wants to evacuate their almost flooded box car: "When it's time to go – we'll go. We'll do what we have to" (469).

1.1. 'Enjoy the Moment'

Living by the day is one aspect of man's freedom of action. "But man postpones and remembers;" Emerson says in *Self-Reliance*, "he does not live in the present, but with reverted eye laments the past, or, heedless of the riches that surround him, stands on tiptoe to foresee the future" (157). This principle also finds a fertile ground in John Steinbeck's novel. Ma admits it, for instance, in Chapter 13 when asked by Al whether she is afraid of their new life in California: "No, I ain't" she says, "It's too much – livin' too many lives. Up ahead they's a thousan' lives we might live, but when it comes, it'll on'y be one. If I go ahead on all of 'em, it's too much" (132). Neither is she afraid to undertake action, saying: "When somepin happens that I got to do somepin – I'll do it" (132). Casy and Tom are not immune to this doctrine, either. The former mentions it during the makeshift funeral of Grampa, stressing that action is only possible with the living: "All that lives is holy…. But

us, we got a job to do, an' they's a thousan' ways, an' we don't know which one to turn" (154; ch.13). The latter admits such readiness for action, too, although he is initially quite cautious of it, preferring instead to "climb fences when [he] got fences to climb" (185).

Enjoying the moment, furthermore, is expressed by the Okies' hedonistic pursuit of pleasure. Story-telling, occasional movie-watching, alcohol drinking, and, most of all, uncommitted sex, as underscored in Chapter 8 by a group of mongrel dogs courting the favors of a sexually receptive bitch, are their favorite diversions. When Uncle John wants to get drunk, for example, as it is the case on the river bank in California, Pa does not object: "A fella go to do what he got to do. Nobody don't know enough to tell 'im" (286). John's eating and sexual habits conform to this need of instant gratification, too. Thus, when he wants pork, he eats the whole pig until he vomits, while discarding the rest for "he don't want no pig hangin' around" (35). When desperate for sex, in turn, he is capable of romping simultaneously over the unresponsive bodies of three prostitutes. Uncommitted sex is also vital to Casy and to other sexually active male members of the Joad clan. Tom, for instance, describes in detail his rough encounter with a street whore, soon after his release from jail. Neither Grampa is ashamed of his sexual exploits when he wore a younger man's pants. In some cases (notably Al's and Casy's), sex reaches almost addictive proportions. Thus, when Tom asks his father in Chapter 8 about the whereabouts of his teenage brother, he can hear this reply—"He's a-billygoatin' aroun' the country. Tomcattin' hisself to death" (90). And Al's sexual escapades are commonly accepted by the family, which Tom admits in a conversation with Casy—"Take my brother Al. He's out lookin' for a girl. He don't care 'bout nothin' else" (407). Also Casy has no other choice but to endorse them, for such behavior conforms to his philosophy according to which what a man does is right: "He's jus' doin' what he's got to do. All of us [are] like that" (407).

Besides, Casy would be hypocritical again if he dared criticize this 'freedom', bearing in mind his own insatiable sexual appetite during his priesthood years. Sexual freedom also affects his female 'prey', which seem to be drawn to his supposedly large penis the more he admonishes such behavior during the Sunday prayers.

Living by the moment, finally, involves expressing few regrets—"I do not wish to expiate," Emerson says in Self-Reliance, "but to live" (149). And the Joads, with the exception of the guilt-ridden Uncle John, abide by this principle lock, stock, and barrel. Tom expresses it, for example, in relation to the two homicides he has committed – one in a drunken brawl, for which he spends four years in jail, and the other when avenging Casy's killer at the Hooper ranch. "[I]f I seen Herb Turnbull comin' for me with a knife right now," he reflects on the first incident, "I'd squash him down with a shovel again" (60). Pa agrees—"He only done what any man would a done" (149). Neither does Tom feel much contrition after his second killing, saying "He don't feel no worse'n if he killed a skunk" (423). Ma, despite regretting the loss of human life, does not blame him for what he did, either: "It's awright. I wisht you didn't do it. I wisht you wasn't there. But you done what you had to do. I can't read no fault on you" (415).

1.2. Break with Tradition

Doing what one has to do may also involve severing ties with tradition. "[W]hy should we grope among the dry bones of the past…?" (3), Emerson asks at the opening of *Nature*. Great people are considered great, he adds in *Self-Reliance*, because they "they set at naught books and traditions" (145). Tocqueville's ascribes this break with the past to democracy itself, saying the following in *Democracy in America*:

> Among democratic nations new families are constantly springing up, others are constantly falling away, and all that remain change their condition; the

> woof of time is every instant broken and the track of generations effaced. Those who went before are soon forgotten; of those who will come after, no one has any idea: the interest of man is confined to those in close propinquity to himself. As each class gradually approaches others and mingles with them, its members become undifferentiated and lose their class identity for each other. Aristocracy had made a chain of all the members of the community, from the peasant to the King; democracy breaks that chain and severs every link of it. (ctd. in Marr 58)

Severance with tradition can also be noticed in *The Grapes of Wrath*. One example of it is shown in Chapter 10, whereby the dispossessed farmers, including Ma Joad, discard the family relics before heading west:

> The women sat among the doomed things, turning them over and looking past them and back. This book. My father had it. He liked a book. *Pilgrim's Progress*. Used to read it. Got his name in it. And his pipe – still smells rank. And this picture – an angel….Here's a letter my brother wrote the day before he died. Here's an old-time hat. These feathers – never got to use them. (96)

Cutting ties with tradition is also exemplified by Connie's desertion of his pregnant wife since, as French (1961) notices, it nips in the bud the formation of a new family (104). More importantly even, it is demonstrated by a gradual shift from the sanctity of the family unit to cooperation (102). The first signs of such change can be noticed by Casy's helping Ma salt the pork. When Ma protests, saying it is women's work, Casy replies: "It's all work….They's too much of it split up to men's or women's work" (Steinbeck 116). The turning point in this shift is Tom's realization of Casy's transcendental doctrine in his final speech with mother. Soon after, the remaining members of the family follow, i.e. co-

operating, or defying tradition. Thus, Pa helps build a dam to prevent the flooding of the cotton-pickers' camp; even Ma finally accepts the notion of responsibility going beyond the family, by thanking the woman for her help during Rosasharn's labor and offering her help to anybody who needed it (French 107).

Other examples of the break with tradition are shown by the burials of Grampa and Granma Joad. "Law changes," says Casy to Pa when the latter is uncertain whether to bury Grampa illegally on the side of the road, "but 'got to's' go on. You got the right to do what you got to do" (149). Grampa, then, is secretly interred in an unnamed and unmarked grave under the cover of the night. At least, however, he receives the vestiges of a Christian burial: the epitaph written on a page torn out from the Bible and buried with him in a bottle; the last speech from the preacher; the symbolic anointment from Ma Joad, who, apart from washing and dressing his body, puts silver coins on his eyelids as well as folds his arms in the form of the cross. Very importantly, also, Grampa is buried by his own son – the same way Granma buried his father, and his father his father. The Joads, therefore, despite breaking the law, do not completely break with tradition, which cannot be said about the corpses of Granma and Rose of Sharon's still-born baby. The former gets buried as a pauper, while the latter is sent down the creek by Uncle John. "Go down an' tell 'em." says the indignant John to the corpse, "Go down in the street an' rot an' tell 'em that way. That's the way you can talk. Don't even know if you was a boy or a girl. Ain't gonna find out" (473).

2. Religious Self-Reliance

Man's freedom should also apply to his religious faith, according to Emerson. "Let us demand our own works and law and worship" (3), he says at the opening of *Nature*. He rejects traditional church dogmas and institutions as "dead" (148) and manipulative. "If…a

man claims to know and speak of God and carries you backward to the phraseology of some old mouldered nation…," he adds in *Self-Reliance*, "believe him not" (156-57). Prayer, in Emerson's eyes, is dehumanized and phantasmagoric, with the preacher looking at things "not as a man, but as a parish minister" (150). Prayer, he continues, "loses itself in endless mazes of natural and supernatural, and mediatorial and miraculous" (162), instead of being a revelation to people, whereby man is God to himself. Religion, therefore, should be based on intuition rather than on experience—"Every man discriminates between the voluntary acts of his mind and his involuntary perceptions, and knows that to his involuntary perceptions a perfect faith is due" (156)—and express the vision of the infinite soul and the unity in nature: "Prayer that craves a particular commodity…is vicious. Prayer is the contemplation of the facts of life from the highest point of view. It is the soliloquy of a beholding and jubilant soul….But prayer as a means to effect a private end is meanness and theft. It supposes dualism and not unity in nature and consciousness" (Emerson 163).

Similar thinking is expressed in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Casy treats prayer, for example, not as a way of financial enrichment or telling others what to do, but rather as the confirmation of love for all people. Muley emphatically denies the former when asked by the ex-preacher if he has ever accepted money for his service: "By God, you never ….People around here got so use' to not givin' you money they got to bein' a little mad when some other preacher come along an' passed the hat" (62). Casy gives up formal preaching because he realizes that both he and his parishioners have lost their faith in God and the church: "The sperit ain't in the people much no more; an' worse'n that, the sperit ain't in me no more" (25). Neither can he any longer reconcile his sexual appetites with his preaching responsibilities: "I'd take one of them girls out in the grass, an' I'd lay with her….Then I'd feel bad, an' I'd pray an' pray, but it didn't do no good. Come the nex'

time, them an' me was full of the sperit, I'd do it again. I figgered there just wasn't no hope for me, an' I was a damned ol' hypocrite" (26).

The most visible examples of Emerson's religious independence on Steinbeck's novel are expressed, however, by man's attitude toward sin and atonement, as well as by his own divinity.

2.1. Sin and Atonement

Religious freedom may also entail the risk of being called a sinner, since the notion of right and wrong is relative to both Emerson and the characters of Steinbeck's novel. "[I]f I am the Devil's child," Emerson challenges in Self-Reliance, "I will live then from the Devil. No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature. Good and bad are names very readily transferable to that or this; the only right is what is after my constitution; the only wrong what is against it" (148). Parkes explains that Emerson has adopted this idea of sin from the Unitarians, who maintained that sin did not exist. How is it possible to sin against God, he seems to be asking, if God's only feature is goodness? (Konvitz 124). Also Arvin admits in *The House of Pain* that Emerson's interpretation of sin bears similarities with Christian theology. It is based, he says on the difference between the perception of reality to the intellect, or thought and the perception of reality to the conscience, or will. Seen from the perspective of the thought, sin is a reduction; seen from the perspective of the will, on the other hand, it signifies "pravity" (Konvitz 55). Sin only seems real when it is looked at objectively; from the subjective point of view, it is "no essence" (55): "Both sin and suffering, moral and natural evil, *appear* in experience; but they are indeed appearances, not ultimate realities; what reality they have is relative, external, transitory….They are convictions of an essentially religious sort…[being] in themselves inconsistent with the Tragic Sense" (55).

Similar attitude is reflected in *The Grapes of Wrath* by ex-preacher Casy, who comes to the conclusion that his atonement, caused by his fornication while still a preacher, was unnecessary and unproductive. “There ain’t no sin and there there ain’t no virtue.” he says to Tom early in the novel, “There’s just stuff people do” (28). And, “Maybe it ain’t a sin.” he continues, “Maybe it’s just the way folks is. Maybe we been whippin’ the hell out of ourselves for nothin’” (28). He rationalizes such reasoning by invoking the instinctive behavior of the young women who follow him into “the grass” (27): “Here’s me preaching grace. An’ here’s them people gettin’ grace so hard they’re jumpin’ an’ shoutin’. Now they say layin’ with a girl comes from the devil. But the more grace a girl got in her, the quicker she wants to go out in the grass” (27). Casy also explains his notion of the unreality of sin to the ever-expiating Uncle John. Sin, he says, is what one believes it is; it “is somepin you ain’t sure about” (238). “Them people that’s sure about ever’thing an’ ain’t got no sin” he continues, “- with that kind a son-of-a-bitch, if I was God I’d kick their ass right outa heaven!” (238). He consoles Uncle John, who keeps blaming himself for the negligent death of his wife: “for anybody else it was a mistake, but if you think it was a sin – then it’s a sin. A fella builds his own sins right up from the groun’” (239). Still another example of Casy’s notion of the unreality of sin is shown by him during Grampa’s funeral: “This here ol’ man jus’ lived a life an’ jus’ died out of it. I don’t know whether he was good or bad, but that don’t matter much” (154). Such thinking, finally, seems to be subconsciously embraced by Tom, who, when asked at the beginning of the novel whether his behavior has changed since his baptism, answers—“They wasn’t nothing in it, good or bad” (30).

Furthermore, mere optimism or human compassion may often be misinterpreted as sin. This is denoted in Steinbeck’s novel respectively by Ma Joad and Jim Rawley, the manager of the government camp (341). The former, when provoked by Mrs. Sandry’s

religious gloom and doom speech, bursts out violently, only stopping short of telling the woman to go to hell: "Git out now, 'fore I git to be a sinner a-tellin' you where to go. Git to your wailin' an' moanin'" (340). Ma's behavior can be attributed to Casy's Emersonian-at-heart philosophy, which affects for instance her decision to not allow a group of chanting and howling Jehovites to perform a religious service for the unconscious and slowly dying Granma: "Maybe it's him made me tell them people they could't come here. That preacher, he's getting' roun' to thinkin' that what people does is right to do" (225). The camp manager, in turn, is branded a devil because he refuses to "make people miserable" (329). Sin, to him, is the denial of basic human rights, as implied by the fanatic woman: "He don't believe in sin….Says the sin is bein' hungry. Says the sin is bein' cold….Says can't see God in them things" (328).

Religious self-reliance, finally, mocks expiation (Emerson 149). One of the best examples of such degrading both to Emerson and most characters of *The Grapes of Wrath* behavior is shown by a group of the religious faithful who gather for an improvised mass at the government camp:

> Beside an irrigation ditch a preacher laboured and the people cried. And the preacher paced like a tiger, whipping the people with his voice, and they grovelled and whined on the ground. He calculated them, gauged them, played on them, and when they were all squirming on the ground he stooped down and of his great strength he picked each one up in his arms and shouted, Take 'em, Christ! and threw each one in the water. (349-350)

People like Mrs. Sandry, who believe that instead of "dancin' an' huggin'…, [there] should be wailin' an' moanin' in sin" (340), are the antithesis of Emerson's religious self-reliance and freedom. Tom does not hide his cynicism for such "the dry bones of the past"

(Emerson 3), when advising Casy what to do with his church 'flock': "Lead 'em around and around….Sling 'em in the irrigation ditch. Tell 'em they'll burn in hell if they don't think like you. What the hell you want to lead 'em someplace for? Jus' lead 'em" (26).

Like Tom, most of the Joads are immune to this un-Emersonian way of life. With the exception of Uncle John, who fluctuates between the feeling of guilt and the disorganized acts of charity, they generally follow the path of their forefathers, i.e. taking "what come to 'em dry-eyed" (330). Ma explains this to her pregnant daughter, who has been recently cursed and intimidated by Mrs. Sandry: "I knowed people built theirself up with sin till they figgered they was big mean shucks in the sight a the Lord" (330-331). Pa's attitude toward religious atonement is similar to that of Ma. When Uncle John falls into a sudden, unjustified feeling of self-blame after the events at the Hooper ranch, Pa caustically reacts: "Oh shut up! We ain't got the time for your sin now" (415). And this transcendental education inevitably sinks into Uncle John himself, whose alternate charity and drinking bouts cannot bring him inner peace (74). Barely half-way through the novel he admits he "ain't never done nothin' that wasn't part sin" (244).

2.2. Man's Divinity

Religious freedom, as construed by Emerson, may also transform man into the Almighty God. Such divinity, as mentioned before, is possible not only thanks to his unity with nature, but also owing to intuition itself. "This sentiment is divine and defying." says Emerson about perception in *An Address*, "It is the beatitude of man" (70). As Parkes puts it, religious self-reliance means relinquishing by the individual "to his own unconscious" (Konvitz 129). Unlike the Christian tradition whereby the individual relinquishes himself to God and to His earthly representative, i.e. the Church, the unconscious represents God in itself. Man's divinity, in turn, with its instinctive love of all people, absolves man of the

'original sin,' or "corrects the capital mistake of the infant man" (Emerson 70). "Why should we assume the faults of our friend, or wife, or father, or child", Emerson rephrases the same view in *Self-Reliance*, "because they sit around our hearth, or are said to have the same blood?" (159). Human divinity, in addition, has helped Emerson, as Matthiessen points out, avoid running into a trap of destroying any valid individuality by the extremity of his idea of individuality. What helped him avoid that risk, he continues, was "the presence…of universal breadth in his doctrine that all souls are equal" (8). Mattehiessen goes on—"What stirred him most deeply was not man's separateness from man, but his capacity to share directly in the divine superabundance" (8).

Jesus Christ is an excellent example of man's godliness, according to Emerson. By considering himself divine despite being human, Jesus demonstrated that God spoke and acted through him (72). At the same time, Emerson continues in *An Address*, he is the only person in the history of mankind "who has appreciated the worth of man" (73). Wagenknecht explains this divinity of Jesus still further:

> His was a soul which had no weakness in it and therefore offered no impediments to the Divine Spirit working through it; unlike other men, he listened only to the voice of God within himself. He understood the soul of man and his true greatness also, perceiving that God incarnated Himself in man, and upon this basis he made a great stand for man's spiritual nature against all sensualism, form, and crime. (209-210)

Over the centuries, however, Jesus' doctrine has been distorted and turned into a myth, with "tropes" and "miracles" (73) replacing that of spontaneous love. To Emerson and Jesus alike, it is the life of any human being itself that is a miracle, and not "the blowing clover and the falling rain" (Emerson 72). Steinbeck's novel seems to agree with the above

notions. It lends support to the claim, for example, that Jesus Christ should be treated primarily as a human being. This is suggested by the truck driver, who gives Tom a ride at the beginning of the novel. The trucker, before reciting a sexually charged 'poem' he has heard from an acquaintance of his, says to Tom that even "Jesus H. Christ wouldn't know what [his friend] meant" (15). The middle initial used with Jesus' name implies the driver is talking about a person, and not about God. Emerson's belief in the miracle of human life, in turn, is corroborated by Rosasharn's life-nourishing gesture at the end of the novel. By obeying her maternal instinct, she puts in practice not only the Emersonian doctrine of love, but also displays her own divinity, thus, following Emerson's call expressed in *An Address*: "Obey thyself. That which shows God in me, fortifies me. That which shows God out of me, makes me a wart and a wen" (73-74).

Man's godliness is also invoked by Jim Casy, whose congruence with Emerson's "transparent eyeball" (6) is corroborated by his "heavy and protruding" eyes (Steinbeck 23). His resemblance to Christ is also connoted by his solitude, which Casy admits himself: "I been in the hills, thinkin', almost you might say like Jesus went into the wilderness to think His way out of a mess of troubles" (88). Like Jesus, he ran away from society due to his disappointment with it: "I ain't saying I'm like Jesus….But I got tired like Him, an' I got mixed up like Him, an' I went into the wilderness like Him, without no camping stuff" (88). Even sharing the same initials as Christ, as pointed out for exmaple by Lisca and Shockley (1972), is indicative of such divinity. Despite Casy's denials of his affinity with God (a "preacher ain't nothin' but a man" (238)), he nevertheless bows his head in Chapter 18 when Sairy Wilson tells him she is convinced he "got a God" (232). His godliness is even implied by the way Ma Joad looks at him after his speech about the of unity of mankind: "Ma watched the preacher as he ate, and her eyes were questioning, probing, and

understanding. She watched him as though he were suddenly a spirit, not human any more, a voice out of the ground" (89). Last but not least, Casy himself intimates his divine omniscience by admitting to Pa his foreknowledge of Grampa's impending death. Grampa died, he says, not because of the murderous conditions he was subjected to during the family's westward trek, but because of being separated from his land: "Oh, he was breathing…but he was dead. He was that place, an' he knowed it" (156). Finally, Casy's divinity is paramount during the strike-breaking scene at Hooper Ranch, where, like Jesus Christ, he gets killed for his convictions and the love of the people. His last words sound especially familiar: "You don't know what you're a-doin'" (409).

Casy and Rose of Sharon are not, however, the only personas in *The Grapes of Wrath* endowed with divine qualities. Other characters possess them, too. Ma Joad, for example, demonstrates her God-like qualities in her impeccable judgment: "…from her position as arbiter she had become as remote and faultless in judgment as a goddess. She seemed to know that if she swayed the family shook, and if she ever really deeply wavered or despaired the family would fall, the family will to function would be gone" (81). She also seems to possess the divine gift of omniscience, which is especially characteristic in the last chapter of the novel during her husband's update on the flood situation. To Pa's every piece of report, Ma answers enigmatically—"I know" (469), without being informed about any of those occurrences in advance. Last but not least, Ma's godliness is implied by her transformation from the love of the family to a love for all people. It is she who feeds the hungry children at the Hoovervile camp, despite the family's ever-shrinking financial resources. It is she, finally, who, by simple bowing of her head, convinces her daughter to suckle a starving man.

Godliness, as pointed out by Levant (121), is also indicative of the Weedpatch camp manger, Jim Rawley, as well as the chairman of the Central Committee, Ezra Huston. The appearance of the former is congruent with that of Casy and Jesus Christ: "A little man dressed all in white…with a thin, brown, lined face and merry eyes. He was lean as a picket" (322). Like Casy and Christ, in addition, the camp manager is not devoid of human characteristics and their accompanying vulnerabilities, implied for instance by the worn out seams of his clothes. The manager's divinity is also implied by his omniscience, expressed in a conversation with Rose of Sharon. "'I know she does." he admits his knowledge of Mrs. Sandry calling him a devil, "That's because I won't let her make people miserable….Don't you worry. She doesn't know.' And he walked quickly away" (329). Ezra Huston's divinity, in turn, is implied by his conciliatory words toward the trouble-makers hired to discredit the Weedpatch government camp in the upcoming staged riot, as well as by his uttering of Jesus' last words while referring to those trouble-makers: "They don't know what they're doin'" (364).

The Christ-like figure, finally, is represented in a story told by one of the campers at Weedpatch about a native Indian warrior. The unarmed Indian stretches his arms in the form of a cross in front of the regiment of white American soldiers, as if waiting to be crucified by the Anglo-Saxon invaders. He becomes momentarily equal to the omnipotent God, enchanting and challenging the bewildered white soldiers at the same time: "Against the sun, with his arms out. An' he looked big – as God' (346). For long moments, the regiment's troops become paralyzed with awe, unable to shoot, giving in only after a threat from their own commander. Like Jesus, then, the "brave" Indian (345) gets killed a martyr, sacrificing himself for the ultimate cause – freedom.

3. Mutability

Man's relationship to himself, lastly, is characterized by the already mentioned Emersonian law of compensation, which apart from its inherent optimism, also reflects a perpetually-contrastive, bipolar fluctuation in nature, revealing itself "in desire and satiety; in the ebb and flow of the sea; in day and night; in heat and cold" (Emerson 54). Such fluctuation is also present in *The Grapes of Wrath*, and is represented for example by Uncle John's obsessive-compulsive eating, drinking and sexual habits, followed by his acts of charity. Another example of the law of compensation is depicted in the novel by the difference between close and distant vision, or by delineating versus deslimning effects of light (see 1.3.3.). Finally, it is portrayed by the river in California, which, on the one hand, separates Noah forever from his family, while at the same time offering him permanent tranquility, uniting him with the Spirit and the surrounding Nature. As Woodlief puts it, the river serves both as "the reconciliation of union and separation, continuity and change" (2).

The idea of mutability is also portrayed by Emerson's notion of 'Whim' (149), or changing one's mind. Such vacillation, according to him, not only is not a vice, but is even consistent with the soul itself:

> A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do….Speak what you think now in hard words and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict every thing you said to-day. (152)

Being misunderstood, therefore, is not so bad after all. On the contrary—Emerson continues in *Self-Reliance*—it is a sign of greatness: "Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure

and wise spirit that ever took flesh" (152). In a similar vein, some of Steinbeck's characters from *The Grapes of Wrath* are frequently inconsistent and misunderstood. A prime example of it is a dilemma whether people are changing or constant. Tom and Casy adhere to the former position, saying respectively: "They is a whole country movin'. We're movin' too" (184); and, "Seems to me we don't never come to nothin'. Always on the way. Always goin' and goin'" (136). Ma, on the other hand, considers people to be more stable, although she also believes in their perpetual flow: "Woman," she says to the dejected Pa and Uncle John, "it's all one flow, like a stream, little eddies, little waterfalls, but the river, it goes right on….We ain't gonna die out. People is goin' on – changin' a little, maybe but goin' right on" (448; ch.28). These very discrepancies also reflect Emerson's opinion on the issue, who says in *Self-Reliance* that man should expect everything to be "titular and ephemeral but he" (148); while at the same time admiting in *Farming* that "The adamant is always passing into smoke" (753).

But whim in *The Grapes of Wrath* is not only restricted to its characters. Also, the novel's narrator falls prey to it. Like Emerson, for example, he vacillates between hatred and admiration for the scientific progress. On the one hand, the tractor is "the monster" to him, especially when it is in private hands; on the other, it would not be a bad thing if it were collectively owned. A better example yet of this paradox is the narrator's partial treatment of the tractor vis-à-vis the truck. While the former mostly alienates man from his land and property (124), the latter is the Joads' savior, becoming almost one with them: "Al was one with his engine…He had become the soul of the car" (131; ch. 13). Tom explains this unity of man with the car to Casy, impressed by the car-fixing ability of the two brothers: "Got to grow into her when you're little kid….It ain't just knowin'. It's more than that" (197). Another ambiguous area treated by both Emerson and Steinbeck is the issue of

property. Both writers seem to fall into the same trap by sanctioning the use of force in its acquisition, on the one hand, and calling it a "crime" (Emerson 168), on the other. Emerson calls the former a "natural right" (11); Steinbeck simply employs a double-standard here—he turns a blind eye to the way the descendants of the Oklahoma tenant farmers wrested the land from the Indians (i.e. by exterminating them), while simultaneously condemning the appropriation of the Mexican land by white settlers (245).

Finally, such discrepancy is depicted by both Emerson and the characters of *The Grapes of Wrath* in their attitude toward fate and action. On the one hand, they demonstrate that man should accept his plight passively, often in the form of abandonment: "Accept[ing] the place the divine providence has found for [him], the society of contemporaries, the connection of events" (Emerson 146). On the other hand, as enumerated earlier in this chapter, they consider man his own torch and task-master, urging him for decisive action. The former attitude is portrayed in the novel by the languid Noah, later joined by his father and Uncle John. Even Ma, Tom, or Casy initially do not exhibit much initiative. Ma, for example, admits to Al, when asked whether she is looking forward to her new life in California, that she is "jus' a settin' here waitin'" (132; ch. 13). Such passivity can also be seen temporarily on the faces of men both during the opening drought scene, as well as during the flood at the book's closure, before turning suddenly to anger and action:

> Men stood by their fences and looked at the ruined corn, dying fast now…The men were silent and they did not move often. And the women came out of the houses to stand beside their men – to feel whether this time the men would break….After a while the faces of the watching men lost their bemused perplexity and became hard and angry and resistant. (9-10)

And:

> The rain stopped….And the men came out of the barns, out of the sheds. They squatted on their hams and looked out over the flooded land. And they were silent….And where a number of men gathered together, the fear went from their faces, and anger took its place. (459)

The Okies' fluctuation, as Smith might put it, reflects Emerson's split vocation, which resulted from the Unitarian claim of man's godliness. It can be best illustrated, Smith says in *Emerson's Problem of Vocation*, by two figures: that of an Artist and that of a Student. While the transcendentalist Actor/Artist delves into humanitarianism, thus reformism, the transcendentalist Student examines "unity from within…away from society to the highly individualistic and passive cult of self-reliance" (Konvitz 63). And Emerson generally follows the path of the Student, choosing abandonment over action. One of the reasons for his choice is based on a Deistic premise that the progress of the universe should not be tinkered with by any man or religious group (63). Another one is the result of a Christian belief that no external changes can cause intellectual and moral amelioration (63). Most importantly, though, his escape from society is most likely influenced by English Romanticism, which ignored society by elevating intuition to the status of "Nature's Priest" (Konvitz 64). Emerson (and Steinbeck's Casy alike) did not, however, give up completely his Puritan past. This split vocation was caused in part by his inability to run away from the feeling of social responsibility, as well as by his "lack of clearly defined ethical ideal to which he could turn to" (64). "It is this inner debate", Smith says "which explains the peculiar vehemence with which Emerson insisted upon poise and proclaimed the doctrine of self-reliance" (66).

CHAPTER IV

Man's Relationship to Others

1. Man to Society

In general, Emerson's attitude toward society is rather critical. Society, he says in *Self-Reliance*, strengthens conformity, and muffles people's primary trust in themselves. Its tradition "kills" the individual's freedom and self-reliance:

> Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. Society is a joint-stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue in most request is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion. It loves not realities and creators, but names and customs. (148)

Society is also to blame for damaging the universal bond among men. It is deeply divided and impotent, whereby its members "have suffered amputation from the trunk, and strut about so many walking monsters—a good finger, a neck, a stomach, an elbow, but never a man" (Emerson 46). What destroys this divine unity is human greed and egoism— "The reason why the world lacks unity," Emerson says in *Nature*, "…is because man is disunited with himself….Love is…its demand" (41). Or, as Casy puts it in *The Grapes of Wrath*, this 'holiness' "only got unholy when one mis'able little fella got the bit in his teeth an' run off his own way, kickin' an' draggin' an' fightin'" (89). One of the main causes of this greed, according to Emerson, is society's reliance on tradition, or experience, rather than on intuition, which effectively leads to man's degeneration: "The doctrine of the divine nature being forgotten, a sickness infects and dwarfs the constitution. Once man was all; now he is

an appendage, a nuisance" (71). The most severe form of this degeneration, Emerson alleges in *An Address* is man's "absolute badness" (70), or death. And Casy is undoubtedly aware of that when he says: "Here's me that used to give all my fight against the devil 'cause I figured the devil was the enemy. But they's somepin worse'n the devil got hold a the country, an' it ain't gonna let go till it's chopped loose" (137). The result of this greed is not only the expropriation of thousands of 'Okies' from their land and their resulting misery as migrants in California, but also the extermination or forced removal from the land of thousands of Mexicans and American Indians, as exemplified by the poignant story about an Indian warrior.

Another Emersonian idea pertaining to society and utilized by Steinbeck in *The Grapes of Wrath* is the notion of its mutability. Like nature and man himself, society is constantly changing. Its unity is short-lived, Emerson claims in *Self-Reliance*, just as short-lived are the people and their experience: "Society is a wave. The wave moves onward, but the water of which it is composed does not….Its unity is only phenomenal. The persons who make up a nation to-day, next year die, and their experience dies with them" (168). Such lack of unity in society is implied in a jail story about a labor organizer who gets betrayed by the same people he vows to protect. Society, moreover, never advances, no matter how big the effort: "[I]t is barbarous, it is civilized, it is christianized, it is rich, it is scientific; but this change is not amelioration. For every thing that is given something is taken" (Emerson 166). This perpetual change reflects the already mentioned "law of compensation", and is depicted in *The Grapes of Wrath* by thousands of the migrant workers heading west and by the likelihood of social and political change. Both Tom and Casy agree on this point: "They is a whole country movin'. We're movin' too" (184). Earlier on, Casy expresses this idea in a conversation with a bewildered gas owner,

uncertain about the direction in which the country is going: "Seems to me we don't never come to nothin'. Always on the way. Always goin' and goin'" (136). The same principle (with or without Steinbeck's intention) can be observed in the massive disparity between haves and have-nots, and is particularly underscored by the differences in the amount of possessed land (in the case of the migrants, they have none). Finally, the law of compensation, as it pertains to man's relationship to others, is implied by the shift of leadership within the Joad family—from the increasingly despondent Pa to the increasingly assertive Ma.

The three other issues that have a significant effect on man's relationship to society are abandonment, sympathy, and the attitude toward the common man.

1.1. Abandonment

Abandonment plays not only an essential role as man's source of intuition, but it is the precondition of all human achievement. As Santayana notes in *Emerson*, abandonment represents the absolute, and only the absolute can satisfy mysticism. Since the absolute does not know any concrete form, he alleges, it must be represented through solitude: "The lights of life must be extinguished that the light of the absolute may shine, and the possession of everything in general must be secured by the surrender of everything in particular" (Konvitz 35). Abandonment is also Emerson's reaction to Reason and Society. According to Paul in *The Angle of Vision*, society is represented by proximate vision because, like in close vision, it loses "the sense of relationship" (Konvitz 165) by focusing inordinately on trifles. Attaining genius, therefore, requires both physical and spiritual isolation from society, with no place in it for "friend, client, child, sickness, fear, want, [or] charity" (Emerson 160). The same view is repeated by Emerson in *Nature* and in *An Address*, respectively: "if a man would be alone, let him look at the stars" (5); and,

"…leave all and follow—father and mother, house and land, wife and child" (76). The ultimate reward for such rejection of "the fashions, the education, the religion of society…, the self-accusation, the faint heart, the frequent uncertainty and a loss of time" (56) is man's intuitive mastery of human nature (56). By rising above private concerns, man achieves ultimate freedom—"He is the world's eye. He is the world's heart" (56). Like the Emersonian man, Steinbeck's Casy comes to the conclusion that his fulfillment requires at least temporary isolation from society. A man has to make a choice: either he wants to be a good preacher, husband or farmer, or follow instinctively his genius by going into solitude. And Casy chooses the latter—"I went off alone, an' I sat and figured" he says, "The sperit's strong in me, on'y it ain't the same. I ain't so sure of a lot of things" (25). Abandonment to him is a necessary means for quelling his doubts, and what he finds as a result of it is a sacred unity with nature and the whole humanity: "An' I got thinkin', on'y it wasn't thinkin', it was deeper down than thinkin'. I got thinkin' how we was holy when we was one thing, an' mankin' was holy when it one thing" (89).

Temporary abandonment is also one of the main causes of Tom's sudden adoption of Casy's transcendental vision. His brief period of hiding in the bushes near the cotton plantation—caused by his killing of a militia member during the strike-breaking at the Hooper ranch—serves as such a metamorphosis. Similarly to Casy, however, who decides to return to society after his seclusion in the desert, Tom realizes that extended abandonment is an impediment to achieving such genius, in particular, preventing him from attaining the universal unity of men. Or, as Tom rephrases Casy's words, solitude "ain't no good 'cause his little piece of a soul wasn't no good 'less it was with the rest, an' was whole" (442; ch.28). Such a stance, again, is not incongruous with that of Emerson, who

admits in *Society and Solitude* that too much abandonment makes people unable to voice their beliefs, and even runs counter to nature itself:

> But how insular and pathetically solitary are all the people we know….[T]his banishment to the rocks and echoes no metaphysics can make right or tolerable. This result is so against nature, such a half-view, that it must be corrected by a common sense and experience….A man must be clothed with society, or we shall feel a certain bareness and poverty, as of a displaced and unfurnished member. (742-3)

Santayana agrees, adding in *Emerson* that complete substitution of understanding with imagination, kills imagination itself. "[I]f the understanding is rejected because it cannot grasp the absolute", he says, "the imagination and all of its works—art, dogma, worship—must be rejected for the same reason" (Konvitz 35). Common sense and conscience are, therefore, necessary due to their humanity and relativity (35). A balance between society and solitude is therefore necessary, Emerson reiterates: "Now and then a man exquisitely made can live alone, and must; but coop up most men and you undo them" (743). And Tom decides to follow instinctively this balanced path—on the one hand, he vows to "shun the father and mother and wife and brother when genius calls [him]" (Emerson 149)—on the other hand, he pledges to stay within the society's reach and continue Casy's unfinished cause:

> Then I'll be aroun' in the dark. I'll be ever'where – wherever you look. Wherever they's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there. Wherever they's a cop beatin' up a guy, I'll be there….I'll be in the way guys yell when they're mad an' – I'll be in the way kids laugh when they're hungry

> an' they know supper's ready. An' when our folks eat the stuff they raise an' live in the houses they build – why, I'll be there. (Steinbeck 444)

A similar transcendental escape, finally, must be the reason behind Noah's decision to desert the family on a river bank in California. Not only does he abandon "father, mother…and brother," like Emerson calls for in *Self-Reliance* (149), but most likely also he is bound to "forgo the living for the dead," as preached by the Concord sage in *The American Scholar* (55). And the source of his inspiration is the river, which lets him reach a state of Nirvana, keeping him enchanted by its transcendental power: "Like to jus' stay here. Like to lay here for ever. Never get hungry an' never get sad. Lay in the water all life long, lazy as a brood sow in the mud" (Steinbeck 216). Noah's view, then, is consistent with Woodlief, who says that in order to "appreciate a river properly, one must surrender himself to some degree to the elements and float, figuratively if not also literally, open to the experience but not controlling perception" (7).

1.2. Sympathy

Emerson and the characters of *The Grapes of Wrath* alike have a critical attitude not only towards atonement, as discussed earlier in this thesis, but also towards expressing their compassion to others. They follow instinctively Emerson's view expressed in *Self-Reliance* that the best ways of helping another human being is by "imparting to [people] truth and health in rough electric shocks, putting them…in communication with their own reason" (163). One of the most vocal critics of exhibiting sympathy is Tom, especially when it is expressed by religious or charitable organizations in the form of preaching. Such unworthy practice is represented by the do-good Salvation Army, which is "[D]oing good to a fella that's down an' can't smack ya in the puss for it" (102; ch.10). Instead, Tom explains to Casy, preaching should provoke anger among the ones being preached to, "bein' good to

folks when they wanna kill ya for it" (102). Salvation Army's fake and exaggerated compassion, a migrant woman adds, robs people of their dignity: "Las' winter;" she says, "…[W]e was hungry – they made us crawl for our dinner" (335). Tom also expresses his critical attitude toward sympathy during the makeshift burial of Grampa. When Sairy Wilson suggests, "God have mercy on his soul" as Grampa's epitaph, Tom quickly protests: "Sound too much like he was hung" (152). Even the dull, but seemingly compassionate Noah Joad shows his lack of sympathy for the deceased: "Funny thing is – losing Grampa ain't made me feel no different than I done before. I ain't no sadder than I was" (155). Finally, Tom shows his contempt for sympathy during the encounter with the pathetic, half-blind junkyard worker: "You got that eye wide. An' ya dirty, ya stink. Ya jus' asking for it. Ya like it. Lets ya feel sorry for yaself. 'Course ya can't get no woman with that empty eye flappin' aroun'. Put somepin over it an' wash ya face….Buy yaself some white pants. Ya getting' drunk an' cryin' in ya bed, I bet" (191; ch.16).

Other Joads are not effusive in showing pity, either. Ma emphasizes this in Chapters 20 and 22, while chastising her daughter for brooding in self-pity over having been deserted by her husband, Connie: "You git aholt on yaself. Come here now an' peel some potatoes. You're feelin' sorry for yaself" (285); and, "Rosasharn…you stop pickin' at yourself. You're jest a-teasin' yourself up to cry….Our folks ain't never did that. They took what come to 'em dry-eyed" (330). The family's stance is repeated at a private camp in which they decide to spend the night. Tom replies angrily to the camp owner when he calls them "bums" for refusing to pay an extra fee: "An' when'd we get to be bums? We ain't asked ya for nothin'. All of us bums, huh? Well, we ain't askin' no nickels from you for the chance to lay down an' rest" (198). Also Pa Joad lets it be known the family's attitude towards sympathy, when burying Grampa on the side of the road: "We never took nothin' we

couldn't pay; we never suffered no man's charity" (149). Pa's view, again, is consistent with that of Emerson, who admits in *Society and Solitude* that there is no place for charity in society: "Society we must have; but let it be society, and not exchanging news or eating from the same dish" (745).

Man, however, should not be completely devoid of compassion, as Emerson later professes in *Society and Solitude*. Like in the case of abandonment, a certain degree of sympathy is necessary in engaging the masses—"The conditions are met," he says, "if we keep our independence, yet do not lose our sympathy" (745). Sympathy can also be the source of people's energy as well as the springboard for action, according to Emerson: "Concert fires people to a certain fury of performance they can rarely reach alone" (743). Such an attitude is demonstrated in *The Grapes of Wrath*, for example, by the manager of the government camp, who refuses to accept human misery even at the cost of being called a devil (328). The two other characters that exhibit a change of heart toward sympathy are Casy (seen after his jail transformation) and Tom (after the death of his guru). In both cases, sympathy inspires them to undertake action – the protection of the most vulnerable. "You're helpin' to starve kids" (408), says the former moments before being slaughtered by a militia-man; and, "I'll be in the way kids laugh when they're hungry an' they know the supper's ready" (444), says the latter, when saying farewell to his mother.

1.3. Embracing the Common

Emersonian man, moreover, has a paramount respect for the common—not only common natural elements, but also common man. As Dewey says in *Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Emerson restored to the common man "that which in the name of religion, of philosophy, of art, and of morality, has been embezzled from the common store and appropriated to sectarian and class use" (Konvitz 28). He is one of the few, Dewey

continues, who "has comprehended and declared how such malversation makes truth decline from its simplicity, and in becoming partial and owned, become a puzzle of and trick for theologian, metaphysician and litterateur…" (28-29). And here is the Concord sage himself: "The invariable mark of wisdom is to see the miraculous in the common. What is a day? What is a year? What is summer? What is woman? What is a child? What is sleep? To our blindness, these things seem unaffecting" (Emerson 41). Such reverence, apart from helping man get united with nature, unites him with other people, thus, putting in practice the notion of the Over-Soul: "I ask not for the great, the remote, the romantic…; I embrace the common, I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low….The meal in the firkin; the milk in the pan; the ballad in the street; the news of the boat; the glance of the eye; the form and the gait of the body; show me the ultimate reason of these matters…" (61).

Like Emerson, Steinbeck's Casy has a deep affinity for the common. He realizes during his solitude in the desert that he has been too detached from common folk (442; ch.28). He realizes, just like an Emersonian typical member of clergy, that his detachment from regular people has made him unable to hear "the rough, spontaneous conversation of men" (52). And Casy wants to rectify that by returning actively to society and embracing the common man:

> I'm gonna gonna work in the fiel's, in the green fiel's, an' I'm gonna be near to folks. I ain't gonna try to teach 'em nothin'. I'm gonna try to learn. Gonna learn why the folks walks in the grass, gonna hear 'em talk, gonna hear 'em sing. Gonna listen to kids eatin' mush. Gonna hear husban' an' wife a-poundin' the mattress in the night. Gonna eat with 'em an' learn….Gonna lay in the grass, open an' honest with anybody that'll have me. Gonna cuss

> an' swear an' hear the poetry of folks talkin'. All that's holy, all that's what I didn't understan'. (Steinbeck 101)

And more than that—this universal bond with the common makes him and others divine; it shows the supreme importance of man; it shows the miracle of human life that Emerson talks about in *An Address* (72). Embracing the common, then, does to the Okies what the traditional Christian religion cannot do—it fulfills their lives: "An' Almighty God never raises no wages. These here folks want to live decent and bring up their kids decent. An' when they're old they wanta set in the door an' watch the downing sun. An' they're young they wanta dance an' sing an' lay together" (265).Casy's identification with the common, finally, shows that he wants to learn from it, by educating his senses and endurance alike—just as his ideological guru does in *The American Scholar*: "Years are well spent in country labors…; in frank intercourses with men and women…illustrate and embody our perceptions" (54). "[D]rudgery, calamity, exasperation, want," Emerson continues in the same essay, "are instructors in eloquence and wisdom" (53). And such durability and strength of the common is reflected by Ma at the end of Chapter 20, when consoling Tom after his forced servility toward the town vigilantes: "Why, Tom – us people will go on livin' when all them people is gone. Why, Tom, we're the people that live. They ain't gonna wipe us out. Why, we're the people – we go on" (298).

2. Leadership

Man's relationship to others, finally, is determined to a considerable extent by his leadership capabilities. In order to lead people, Emerson says in *Self-Reliance*, one must be completely free: "Absolve you to yourself, and you shall have the suffrage of the world" (148). Only then, he reiterates in *The American Scholar*, will man be able to "cheer, to raise, and to guide men by showing them facts amidst appearances" (55). Emersonian

leader is also representative of his age; he "is a cause, a country, and an age…; and posterity seem to follow his steps as a train of clients. A man Caesar is born, and for ages we have a Roman Empire. Christ is born, and millions of minds so grow and cleave to his genius…" (154). Such representative men are also present in *The Grapes of Wrath*, and are particularly conspicuous in the characters of Casy, Tom, and Ma. Their charisma and wild determination not only allow the Joads to stay intact as a family unit for the most part of the novel, but also serve as a springboard to a vaster 'we', that is, to the universal unity of all men. One of the prisoners in a California jail summarizes such traits as follows: "Anyways, you do what you can. And…the on'y thing you got to look at is that ever'time they's a little step fo'ward, she may slip back a little, but she never slips clear back" (407).

The three characters evolve to their respective leadership roles, despite their natural predisposition in that direction. Casy, for example, has always possessed a captivating speaking ability, which Tom acknowledges moments before the town militia ambushes the strikers at the Hooper ranch: "Always talk. If you was up on the gallows you'd be passin' the time a day with the hangman. Never seen such a talker" (404; ch.26). The striking men present in the tent confirm: "Folks kinda likes to hear 'im, though" (404). Even Casy does not deny his role: "They [= the police] figure I'm a leader 'cause I talk so much" (408). There is a time, however, when he almost desists his leadership 'calling' because of his disillusionment as a preacher: "I got the call to lead the people, an' no place to lead 'em" (26). Instead he turns gradually into a secular leader, admitting to the Joads early in the novel: "An' if I was to pray, it'd be for the folks that don't know which way to turn" (154). The pinnacle of Casy's transformation takes place at a California jail, especially after participating in a non-violent revolt, whereby the prisoners demand and ultimately get better food. It is in that jail, also, where he hears a story from one of the inmates about a

strike organizer who does not give up even when betrayed by the workers whose rights he was defending. These two events allow Casy in no time become a fearless labor organizer himself. His organizational and oratorical skills, however, put him at odds with the state police and big farm owners, dreading social strife and reduced incomes, respectively. Almost inevitably, then, Casy has to pay the highest price for his leadership, who, just like an Emersonian man, "forgo[es] the living for the dead" (Emerson 55).

Casy's cause, however, is not lost since he passes self-trust and self-confidence to others. He belongs, then, as Aaron might say in *Emerson and the Progressive Tradition*, to the men of Reason, as opposed to the men of Understanding (Konvitz 95). The larger of the two, the men of Understanding, are "sunk in deep materialism" (95) and, contrary to the men of Reason, lack "the imaginative penetration," putting the worldly reality ahead of the spiritual one (95). The men of Reason, on the other hand, who belong to "the passive doers", like "poets, seers, philosophers, [or] scholars…, serve[d] humanity as the geographers of the 'supersensible regions' and inspire[d] 'an audacious mental outlook.' They form[ed] no inflexible caste, but they wonderfully 'liberate[d]' the cramped average afraid to trust itself" (Konvitz 95). And Casy, a representative man, does inspire others to follow into his footsteps. Tom is the first such follower. He not only avenges his ideological guru, but vows to continue his quest for human decency and social justice:

> Then I'll be aroun' in the dark. I'll be ever'where—wherever you look.Wherever they's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there. If Casy knowed , why, I'll be in the way guys yell when they're mad an'—I'll be in the way kids laugh when they're hungry an' they know supper's ready. An' when our folks eat the stuff they raise an' live in the houses they build – why I'll be there. (444)

But Tom has not always been like that. In the beginning he is "jus' puttin' one foot in front a the other" (184) and "layin' [his] dogs down one at a time" (185). Instead, he grows gradually to the role of a conscious and charismatic leader, with the death of Casy as a turning point in this education. As a leader, Tom never loses his reliability or composure. When Uncle Joad, for example, suggests during Tom's temporary absence at the Weedpatch camp that he may have deserted the family the same way Connie did, mother unhesitatingly and, as it later turns out, correctly rejects such a possibility: "They's things you know," she says, "They's stuff you're sure of" (344). As the family's financial situation deteriorates and the threat of its breakup ever more real, Tom becomes her only hope in preserving that unity: "You got more sense, Tom….I got to lean on you. Them others – they're kinda strangers, all but you. You won't give up, Tom" (373). Tom also learns from mother that leadership entails personal responsibility and self-control. When he complains to her that he wants to "go out like Al", "get mad like Pa," and "get drunk like Uncle John" (373), he can hear the following response: "You can't. They's some folks that's just theirself an' nothin' more. There's Al – he's jus' a young fella after a girl. You wasn't never like that, Tom" (373). And Tom does not shun responsibility. Even after killing Casy's assassin he is prepared to turn himself in to the authorities, provided that Casy's death was justified: "Ma, I – maybe this fella oughta go away. If – this fella done somepin wrong, maybe he'd think: 'O.K. Le's do get the hangin' over. I done wrong an' I got to take it.' But this fella didn't do nothin' wrong. He don't feel no worse'n if he killed a skunk" (423).

Ma does not stay behind in her leadership role, either. She naturally assumes the command of the family when her husband can no longer cope with the situation. And Pa, albeit reluctantly, accepts her takeover, admitting in Chapter 26: "Seems like women is

tellin' now" (372). Ma proves, in addition, that leadership depends mainly on the strength of one's character (Emerson 22). Tom first learns this lesson while witnessing Ma's revolt in Chapter 16, whereby she refuses to separate the family when their car suddenly breaks down in the middle of nowhere. Not only does she wrest the family's leadership from her increasingly despondent husband, but also convinces Tom that a true leader is not the one who has the strongest biceps, but the one with the strongest resolve. Tom comments in awe: "Jesus Christ, one person with their mind made up can shove a lot of folks aroun'" (181)! Despite Ma's unsuccessful effort to keep the family together, she never falters as a leader. It is she who continues to pull the strings within the family, by barring Tom, for instance, from leaving the family after the incident at the Weedpatch camp: "You ain't goin'. We're takin' you….Don't argue. That's what we'll do" (424). Initially, Pa only grumbles about Ma's leadership: "Seems like the man ain't got no say no more" (424) or, "Funny! Woman takin' over the fambly. Woman sayin' we'll do this here, an' we'll go there. An' I don' even care" (448; ch. 28). Soon he even stops complaining. When he sheepishly suggests leaving their box-car during the flooding at the Hooper ranch, Ma shows him who is in charge: "When it's time to go – we'll go" (469).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

From the analysis provided in this thesis, it can be reasonably stated that Emersonian philosophy is one of the major themes of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. Emerson's influence is manifested in the novel on at least three different levels—on the level of man's relation to nature, on the level of his relationship to himself, and, finally, on the level of his relation to other people.

On the level of man's relationship with nature, *The Grapes of Wrath* deals with Emerson's various uses of nature, and incorporates among others Commodity, Beauty, and Discipline. Nature as a commodity, for instance, serves man not only as a life-sustaining process, but provides him with the essence of human realization – work. The Okies are most content when they can "fling their goddamn muscles aroun' an' get tired" (Steinbeck 265). What frequently prevents them from attaining that precious commodity, however, is the brutish interference of the machine, represented in the novel by the tractor. The dehumanized "monster," as many 'Okies' call it, not only takes away their jobs, but also damages their relationship to work itself.

Another Emersonian use of nature utilized in Steinbeck's novel is beauty. Nature gives man an esthetical pleasure, "arising from outline, color, motion, and grouping" (Emerson 9). This pleasure is often invoked by the beautifying power of light, which has the power, for instance, to transform the Joads' lackluster, old truck into the human-like, "living centre of the family" (Steinbeck 107). Not everyone, however, is equally predisposed to appreciate nature's beauty, Emerson warns and Steinbeck implements. Such ability is mostly restricted to children and poets, since these two groups are simultaneously

capable of the feeling of innocence and of mature judgment. As if in support of this claim, Tom almost automatically rejects his parents' wish that the recently deceased Grampa and Granma could see the beauty of a valley in California, when the family finally reaches the Golden State. "They was too ol'." Tom says, "Who's really seein' it is Ruthie an' Winfiel'" (244). The poet's ability to see nature, in turn, is represented by Casy's transcendental vision on the desert. His "lay[ing] on [his] back an' look[ing] up at the stars" or looking at the sun at dawn and sunset (88) is highly indicative of Emerson's description of the duties of the ideal scholar, who, just like the poet, is also inclined to appreciate nature's beauty. Emersonian beauty of nature, finally, can be conveyed by heroic deeds, even if they are performed amidst the squalor of the "sordid objects" (Emerson 12). In *The Grapes of Wrath*, such beauty is seen during Rose of Sharon's breast-feeding gesture of a starving man taking place at a dilapidated barn, as well as in a story about a courageous Indian warrior, whose poignant death at the hands of the white invaders is compared to the killing of a beautiful pheasant.

Nature, finally, has a considerable educative value. It teaches personal responsibility by means of the "grinding debt" (Emerson 21) and uneven property distribution. The former is corroborated in the novel by the Okies' irresponsible farming practices, which lead ultimately to their bankruptcy and the expulsion from their land. Uneven distribution of property, in turn, is made clear-cut in the huge gaps in terms of the amount of possessed land between the expropriated farmers and big plantation owners in California. The novel's narrator, however, would most likely beg to differ with Emerson's rationale behind such disparity. While the Concord sage considers it completely normal since it reflects individual differences among people, Steinbeck, similarly to Marxists, implies that uneven concentration of property is the sign of social injustice that may eventually lead to a

revolutionary class upheaval. Nevertheless, both writers seem to agree that over-reliance on property undermines man's unity with nature and society, resulting at the same time in his disassociation from that property. The second major lesson nature teaches man is that only the fittest survive. And the Joad family conforms, generally, to this cruel rule – its weakest members either desert or die. Be it Granma, Grampa, Connie, Noah, or even the dog, they all fail to adapt to new conditions quickly enough. The Joads' survival is especially difficult since it is waged on two fronts—with natural elements, on the one hand, and with other people, on the other. Such survival may involve simple skills and attitudes, like fixing cars, sharing gasoline costs or acting "bull-simple", but it may also mean having to slaughter animals or even, in extreme situations, kill people. Thirdly, nature educates man by showing him its unity. This is demonstrated, for example, in the description of the land, which consists not only of "nitrates", "phosphates", or "the length of fiber in the cotton" (124), but is "much more than its analysis" (124). Instrumental in this perception is the distant, or dislimning, power of the eye, which, with the help of the horizon light, allows the Joads to focus their eyes "panoramically, seeing no detail, but the whole dawn, the whole land, the whole texture of the country at once" (122). Horizon light can also do the opposite – it can delineate, or disperse objects, making "a stone, a post, a building have greater depth and more solidity than in the daytime light" (Steinbeck 107). Such atomized vision of nature does not, however, violate Emerson's theory of nature's unity, but rather reflects its variety. Nature, finally, demonstrates its constant flow and renewal. The creation of ad hoc rules in Hooverville camps, the renewing qualities of barley seeds, a "scraggy geranium gone wild" (477), found by Ruthie after the flooding at the cotton camp, and even the corpses of the grandparents as well as Rose of Sharon's still-born baby are some examples of such renewal.

The second major influence on man's relationship with nature is exerted by intuition, or perception. One of the sources of that intuition comes from observing nature, as seen in the novel for instance in Pa's sensing of the early arrival of winter in California. Emersonian intuition can also be drawn from abandonment, like it is the case with Tom's prediction of a riot at the Hooverville camp, thanks to his sixth sense he develops during his four-year incarceration. Such instinctive behavior even affects some of Uncle John's eating, drinking, and sexual habits, acquired most likely during his bouts of seclusion after the negligent death of his wife.

Perception, in addition, is the source of man's optimism and can be derived even from sorrow and evil, thus reflecting Emerson's 'Law of Compensation". Ma Joad certainly puts this doctrine into practice when telling her pregnant daughter that "[A] chile born outa sorrow'll be a happy chile" (151). Similar optimism can be noticed in Ruthie's finding of a blooming flower after the flooding at the cotton farm and after her elder sister's abortive labor, leading ultimately to the pinnacle of the novel's optimism—Rose of Sharon's suckling gesture at the barn. Another source of this optimism is born out of the Joads' ability to see the horizon. They do not lose hope as long as they can see the light where the sky touches the earth – a kind of light at the end of the tunnel, if you will. The sight of the horizon, for instance, foretells Tom's reunification with his family. It also serves him as a guide, as he progresses with Casy toward Uncle John's house. Even before seeing his kin, the same light directs its rays on the rusty Huston truck, indicating the family's imminent hopeful westering. It is this yellowish light, lastly, that allows the Joads to see for the first time the beauty of a California valley, as well as bringing Tom good luck in finding temporary work at the government camp, hours only after their arrival there.

Okies' intuition, finally, reflects Emerson's doctrine of the Over-Soul, or the unity of all men bonded by the universal soul. It is expressed principally by Jim Casy, who like Jesus Christ goes into the desert in search of his true identity. What he finds there instead is part of a bigger soul that belongs to all humanity. This instinctive unity of people, moreover, is closely related to the notion of Spirit, that is, a belief in the love for all people. "What's this call, this sperit?" Casy asks rhetorically, "It's love" (28). "Maybe…it's all men an' all women we love;" he continues, "…maybe that's the Holy Sperit – the human sperit" (29). And Casy not only professes his universal love, but he also puts it in practice by sacrificing his life for it. Rose of Sharon's breast-feeding gesture is another example of such selfless love. By suckling a starving man, as Carpenter first notices, she transmutes her maternal love for a love of all people. This notion of Spirit is also connoted by the circle since, like the circle, it possesses only one center—love. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, the idea of center is implied in the transcendental properties of the river on the banks of which Noah finds permanent peace. Lastly, it is suggested by the horizon light, which unites the Joads around their rusty truck, as well as by Tom subconsciously drawing circles in the sand while listening to Casy's speech about the Spirit in Chapter 4. The Over-Soul, finally, constitutes unity with nature, as demonstrated by the Okies' relationship to their land. Man is not only "carbon…, [n]or salt [n]or calcium"—says the novel's narrator—"He is all these, but he is much more…" (124). Removing him from his land or hiring others to cultivate it destroys this unity, and, as shown by Granma and Grampa, may even cause his death. What helps man preserve this bond with nature is his simultaneous introspection and the study of nature. And Steinbeck's Casy does both during his seclusion in the desert, with the resulting power that elevates him to a God-like status. Two other examples of such universal power are demonstrated by the inmates of a California jail, who manage to get

better food only after staging a spontaneous outcry, as well as by the already mentioned Indian warrior, who for long moments defies alone the whole regiment of Anglo-Saxon invaders by simply standing naked on a rock, with his arms stretched and in the background of the evening sun.

If man's relationship with nature is dominated by the Over-Soul, his relation to himself is largely determined by his intellectual freedom and self-reliance. "To believe your own thought," Emerson challanges is *Self-Reliance*, "to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men—that is genius" (145). And Casy together with the Joads do follow this path – they stand by their principles, trusting no other authority but themselves. They also implement this freedom by their actions – in accordance with Casy's "do-what-you-got-to-do" gospel. Theirs ranges from the seemingly innocent idea of carpe diem to a complete break with tradition. The former can be observed, for example, by the Okies' pursuit of pleasure – in story-telling, movie-watching, alcohol drinking, and, mainly, uncommitted sex. When Al is "Tomcattin' hisself to death" (90), Casy can only endorse it, since as he says "All of us [are] like that" (407). Severance with tradition, in turn, is portrayed by the tenant farmers' burning and discarding their family relics before setting off west. The secret burial of Grampa on the side of Route 66 and, especially, the pauper-style interment of Granma are two other examples of such a break with the past.

Emersonian and Steinbeckian man, moreover, is a staunch believer in religious self-reliance. He rejects the traditional doctrines of the church because he considers them to be manipulative and false. Sin becomes relative to him, almost non-existent, or, as Casy explains to the guilt-ridden Uncle John, it "is somepin you ain't sure about" (238). If sin is relative, there is no need for expiation, Casy alleges while referring to his pricks of conscience caused by his uncontrollable sexual appetite during his priesthood years. And

the majority of the Joads follow this Emersonian-at-heart path of religious freedom. They not only show their lack of atonement, taking "what come to 'em dry-eyed" (330), but exhibit instinctive optimism, even if stigmatized as sinners for it. Religious self-reliance, additionally, means acting as one's own god, and many an 'Okie', including Casy, Tom, Ma, Rose of Sharon, or the manager of the Weedpatch camp, does resemble and act like Jesus Christ. To them, like to Jesus and Emerson, it is the life of any human being that is a miracle, not "the blowing clover and the falling rain" (Emerson 72). They love people so much, Carpenter originally notices, that Casy dies for them, Tom is ready to, and Rose of Sharon breast-feeds a starving stranger, replacing her maternal instinct with the love for everybody.

The final aspect of man's relation to himself is his mutability. Like nature itself, man constantly changes, and with him so does his outlook on the world. Emerson calls this feature of the law of compensation, whim. The examples of this bipolar principle are visible, for instance, in Uncle John's obsessive-compulsive behavior, in the delineating versus dislimning properties of light, or the river's conciliatory vis-à-vis its isolating qualities. Emersonian whim, moreover, can be seen in man's ambiguous attitude toward the machine—on the one hand, as portrayed in the novel by the tractor, it is his nemesis; on the other, as exemplified by the Joads' truck, it is their biggest ally, becoming almost one with them. A double-standard, finally, is employed both by Emerson and the novel's narrator when it comes to legitimate ways of property acquisition—they call it a crime as Steinbeck does for instance in reference to the expulsion of Mexicans from California, while at the same time condoning implicitly the use of violence in such acquisition ("Grampa took up the land, and he had to kill the Indians…" (Steinbeck 38)).

The last type of Emersonian influence in *The Grapes of Wrath* is effected on the plane of man's relation to other people. Both writers do not hide their critical remarks towards society's egotism and greed, as well as its damaging effect on man's relation to himself. They seem to disagree, however, on what is the best way for humans to be. Emerson says that people should be self-reliant, whereas Steinbeck believes that their relationship should be based on mutual help, and that they are at their best when they are cooperating. Emerson holds the self up as the basis of morality, as superior to society, and as the ultimate standard of value. Steinbeck is of a different opinion and says through Casy that "When they're all workin' together, not one fella for another fell, but one fella kind of harnessed to the whole shebang – that's right, that's holy"(89). Their differences aside, both writers notice society's constant change, reflected in the novel, among other things, by the vast discrepancies in the amount of possessed land between the poor and the rich. They concur, in addition, on the issue of abandonment, sympathy, and the attitude towards the common man. Regarding solitude, Casy, like his Concord counterpart, believes that achieving genius requires at least a temporary isolation from society. Such escape helps him resolve his doubts and find his true identity, which in his case is—the Over-Soul. Noah and Tom Joad also seem to be under this transcendental spell when they decide to permanently part with the family. Unlike his elder brother, however, and similarly to Casy, Tom chooses to return to society because, like his spiritual guru, he realizes during his hiding in the bushes that perpetual isolation actually impedes the spiritual brotherhood of men. Such a stance is not inconsistent with Emerson himself, who admits later in life that a certain degree of interaction with society is necessary in man's correct functioning. "We must keep our heads in the one…" he says while referring to solitude, "and our hands in the other", while speaking about society (745).

Equally convergent with Emerson's is the Okies' critical attitude toward expressing sympathy towards others. Such pity is especially shameful, they tend to believe, if it is promoted by religious organizations as it robs people of their dignity. No wonder that Tom and a woman at the Weedpatch camp do no hide their hatred towards the Salvation Army, which makes them listen to "Three solid hours a cornet music" (102) and "crawl for [their] dinner" (335), respectively. To the former, as well as to Ma and Pa, one of the best ways of helping another fellow human being is by provoking anger in him, or as Emerson puts it, by telling the truth "in rough electric shocks" (163). Tom, then, chastises a sloppy one-eyed junkyard worker for his brooding in self-pity: 'You got that eye wide." he says, "An' ya dirty, ya stink. Ya jus' asking for it. Ya like it. Lets ya feel sorry for yaself. 'Course ya can't get no woman with that empty eye flappin' aroun'. Put somepin over it an' wash ya face….Buy yaself some white pants" (191).

Emersonian and Steinbeckian man, furthermore, has a profound respect for the common man's durability and strength. "[W]e are the people that lives." Says Ma to Tom, "They ain't gonna wipe us out" (298). The common man, as noted by Casy, is the source of his inspiration. He wants to learn from him, after his detachment from society as a preacher and during his solitude in the desert; he wants to "learn why the folks walks in the grass", wants to "hear 'em talk…and sing", wants to "listen to kids eating mush" and "hear husban' an' wife a-poundin' the mattress in the night…" (101). This bond with the common man, therefore, fulfils the Joads' lives; it helps them become divine themselves, by showing them the Emersonian miracle of human life.

Lastly, the Emersonian man is a natural and representative of his age leader. He may evolve to that role, as it is the case with Casy, Tom, and Ma, but once she assumes it, there is not turning back or letting up. A true leader, as they all demonstrate, does not give up or

shun responsibility, even in the face of adversity or the loss of family unity; "she may slip back a little," says Casy's inmate in a California jail, "but she never slips clear back" (Steinbeck 407). Instead, he stands by his principles, and, like Casy and Tom, is ready to "forgo the living for the dead" (Emerson 55) because even if he dies, his ideas will not.

Summing up, there should be little doubt that, with a few exceptions, Emerson's philosophy does play a significant role on the lives of the characters of John Steinbeck's novel. Be it their instinctive relation to nature, often acquired in solitude while observing common natural phenomena; their instinctive optimism and the close association with the Over-Soul and Spirit; their Darwinist-like determination that allows them to cling to life in the face of adversity; their intellectual and religious freedom, free of sympathy and atonement, frequently expressed by their own divinity; their mutability and love for the common; and, finally, their leadership—all these issues have been trail-blazed for them by their spiritual father, Ralph Waldo Emerson.

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